

Pass It On!

The Journal of The Children's Music Network

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Issue #81 | Spring 2016

Building Bridges

Music
Connects
the
World



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Good Vibrations: Elise Witt and the Global Village Project



Building CMN: Preserving the History of the Early Years



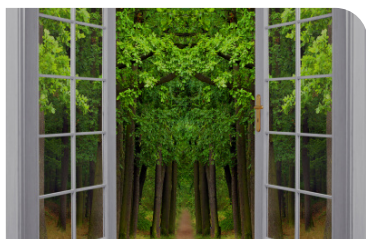
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Letter from the Editor

by Brigid Finucane, Editor

The annual fall conference on the shores of Lake Michigan brought CMN members together to share music and ideas, renew and initiate friendships. Among those gathered were the core group who organized, edited, designed, and published *Pass It On!* Though most of us had not met face to face until this time, the meetings conducted over the weekend were filled with great good will and the easy give and take of longtime friends. We had much to celebrate: an exciting first issue of songs, features, and columns that highlighted the strength and history of our organization; positive member support; and last but not least the coalescing of our *PIO!* staff, which was greatly enlivened by the addition of Val Smalkin as Songs Editor. Her talent and her happy, can-do attitude make her perfect for the job. Welcome!

In the golden hours of our afternoon meetings, we discussed the upcoming issue and the future direction of the journal. We also initiated a discussion about redesigning the Table of Contents, making it more user friendly and ensuring that key components aren't buried. Webmaster Carl Foote and graphic designer Kim Arden spearheaded substantive changes that we hope will make accessing the wide array of content an easy and enjoyable process. Of special note, the new "lock" icon next to a title designates articles that are available to CMN members only. All other content is open to the public—and for you to share!

Although the group was assured that the next issue, *this* issue, would be "less robust" than our first undertaking, this was not to be the case. The issue seemed to take on a life of its own, perhaps inspired by the theme of building bridges. The songs, features, and columns speak to diverse interpretations of the theme—building bridges across time and cultures, between those of different ages and abilities, in settings as familiar as home or as challenging as a hospital.

In these pages you'll find offerings that include [Jackson Gillman's tender ruminations](#) about building a bridge of hope with a critically ill child. At the other extreme lies [Ted Warmbrand's wry and delightful account](#) of child-generated song mutations. Leslie Zak highlights the inspiring work member Elise Witt is doing with the [Global Village Project](#); in a similar vein, Sally Rogers interviews Con Fullam about founding and growing the [Pihcintu Chorus](#) in Maine. Both are stories of choruses composed of refugee children from around the globe who have found their voices and a way to connect through music. In her second [Let's Talk Tech](#) column, Alina Celeste shines a light on the evolution of the Mama Lisa's World website through a fascinating interview with Lisa Yannucci, who has made it her life's work to bring traditional music

and chants from all over the world to our computers or tablets.

The designated CMN Anthems for this issue are songs that resonate deeply in our community and beyond: Carol Johnson's "[Love Grows One by One](#)" and Ruth Pelham's "[Turning of the World](#)." But wait, there are more! including three from members not previously featured in *PIO!*—Laura Jo Ackerman's English version of "[Tulippu](#)," a charming children's song from Japan; Dorothy Cresswell's "[So Many Stars](#)"; and Linda Boyle's "[Spin Me a Web](#)." Both Linda's song and Ted Warmbrand's "[I Lift My Lamp](#)" were shared during the Open the Circle Multicultural Song Swap facilitated by Frank Hernandez at the 2015 conference. Rounding out the treasures to be found are Joyce Rouse's "[A Small Star](#)" and Lydia Adams' "[My House Is a Construction Zone](#)."

We continue to present "classic reprints" with two engaging features from our archives. Phil Hoose's "[An Interview with Frankie and Doug Quimby: The Georgia Sea Island Singers](#)" highlights the work of a group who continues to deeply influence our community through their efforts to preserve and promote African American songs and signing games. Mara Sapon-Shevin's feature, "[Music and Inclusion: Building a Vision Through Song](#)," asserts that "everyone's voice is necessary for us to move the world forward. We don't leave anyone out. We don't leave people behind." This theme is further amplified in Joanie Calem's article, "[Creating Safe Musical Spaces](#)," which addresses teaching and performing for integrated audiences.

Anchoring it all is [Sarah Pirtle's compelling account](#) of the founding and building of CMN, a work of love and heart, impressive in its depth and scope. We can't help but agree with Pete Seeger, who wrote to CMN in 2007 upon Sarah's receiving the Magic Penny Award that "CMN wouldn't exist without Sarah Pirtle. She helped start a good organization, and she knew enough...to bring in other talented people to share the leadership."

Every once in a while, people ask why not open up the journal to writers outside the CMN community? Perhaps the contents of this issue provide an answer—at least for now. Our journal is written *for* us and *by* us, celebrating CMN's mission while embracing and acknowledging the voice, commitment, talent, and generosity of each and every member.

Thank you to all our writers, composers, collectors, and dreamers who made this issue possible.



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Features | Spring 2016

Good Vibrations

Elise Witt and the Global Village Project

by Leslie Zak

"Her performance is like a suitcase plastered with stickers from around the world...populated with interesting characters both heroic and comic."

— The Raleigh Times

In music, a tuning fork is a classic vibratory instrument providing true pitch, used as a guide to all other tonal relationships. In life, it is Elise Witt.

Born in Switzerland to survivors of Nazi Germany, raised in North Carolina, Elise makes her home in Atlanta, Georgia. Speaking fluent Italian, French, German, Spanish, and English and singing in more than a dozen languages, Elise's passion for music and language has carried her around the nation and across the seas. "My work and my life are all about sound," says the multi-instrumentalist and longtime member of the Children's Music Network.

Elise has long been aware that the first sense to develop in a baby transmits sound, and the last sense we lose is that of sound. "Sound is vibration," she says. "It is literal waves in the air. We can physically feel them, and they have the power to move us. The incredible feeling I get from singing alone in a beautiful acoustic or immersed in the voices of singers around me is my greatest passion.

"When we hear the harmonies of a gospel choir or a mountain trio or a group of South African singers, we vibrate with the sound. We hear and *feel* the waves so close together they actually *bump* in the air. When we sing, the sound vibrates us to our core. It changes our molecules and the air around us. When we sing with *others*, we create an inexplicable but tangible, palpable connection."

This passion has carved her career: sharing the power of singing with widely diverse groups, from schools to community choirs, from professional singers to those who, she says, "sadly believe they are 'unmusical' or 'can't carry a tune in a bucket.'"

Elise's path has surely been paved by her ancestors from a broad-branched family tree, including composers Felix Mendelssohn and his sister, Fanny; Jewish philosopher Moses Mendelssohn; German Protestant cow farmers; Russian chemists; Polish intellectuals; French Bordeaux wine growers; a British painter; and a great-great-aunt from Cuba.



(photo by Pat Powers)

Elise is the 2015 William L. Womack Creative Arts awardee, a recognition given to artists using their talents to build understanding between diverse communities. She has been a cultural ambassador to South Africa, Nicaragua, China, Italy, and Yugoslavia, and represented the State of Georgia at the Kennedy Center's 25th Anniversary Celebration. She is at home on stages from Carnegie Hall, Lincoln Center, and the People's Voice Café to the Martin Luther King Jr. Center for Non-Violent Social Change. Her festival work includes Clearwater's Great Hudson River Revival; LEAF, the North Georgia Folk Festival; and the Marin County Fair in California. Currently, and whenever possible, she tours with the great singer-songwriters Becky Reardon and Terry Garthwaite, one of Elise's longtime heroes.



(photo by Pat Powers)

Elise's musical and pedagogical training is prolific and varied. She sang for twenty years with choral master [Robert Shaw](http://www.bach-cantatas.com/Bio/Shaw-Robert.htm) (<http://www.bach-cantatas.com/Bio/Shaw-Robert.htm>) and has studied extensively with icons of improvisation [Rhiannon](http://www.rhiannonmusic.com) (<http://www.rhiannonmusic.com>) and [Bobby McFerrin](http://www.bobbymcferrin.com) (<http://www.bobbymcferrin.com>), Pan-African vocal specialist [Dr. Fred Onovwerosuoke](http://www.africanchorus.org/fredo) (<http://www.africanchorus.org/fredo>), cellist David Darling, and Sweet Honey in the Rock's [Dr. Ysaye Barnwell](http://www.ymbarnwell.com) (<http://www.ymbarnwell.com>), all of whose methods Elise incorporates into her own teaching.

The Georgia Council for the arts has named her a "state treasure."

It's an impressive, unique resume. Yet Elise feels that her current work with refugees is as important as anything she has done.



My Journey Yours

Since its inception in 2008, Elise has been the Director of the Music Program at the [Global Village Project](http://globalvillageproject.org) (<http://globalvillageproject.org>) (GVP), a Georgia-accredited special-purpose middle school for refugee teenage girls from Afghanistan, Burma, Congo, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Iraq, Liberia, Nepal, Somalia, Sudan, and Central African Republic whose educations have been interrupted, their cultures uprooted—and for whom English is a second, third, fourth, or even fifth language.

Because music is located in every part of the human brain, Elise's vocal program is an effective form of language and cultural immersion learning. Singing accelerates and deepens the learning of English, developing confidence and cooperation, while singing with their new American sisters opens communication in many important ways.

With some twenty-plus languages spoken in GVP—most of the girls speak at least three—the program also feeds Elise's own childhood dream of learning every language in the world.

"I know that all of my career has led me to this work," says Elise.

Now in its seventh year, the GVP Music Program has expanded from an

occasional all-school Circle Sing to providing music classes focusing on vocabulary building, pronunciation, ear training, writing skills, improvisation, and kinesthetic learning, and enhances classroom work by creating the opportunity for every student to participate in the [Global Village Chorus](http://elisewitt.com/web/about-elise-witt/the-global-village-project) (<http://elisewitt.com/web/about-elise-witt/the-global-village-project>).

One of Elise's favorite activities with the girls is making a "Crankie" (<http://www.happyfeettravels.org/creations/a-history-of-the-crankie/>) in the style of Bread and Puppet Theatre and "stuntologist" Sam Barlett. Using a long roll of butcher paper, song lyrics are written on the bottom. Students spend many quiet hours illustrating the words, then re-roll the paper. It then becomes a sing-along prompt when rolled through the Crankie box.



(photo by Pat Powers)

"Our first Crankie was 'This Land Is Your Land,' and it was fascinating to see their perceptions of those lyrics," Elise observes. The girls' favorite verses are the powerful last two, one describing long lines at the Relief Office, the other declaring that "nobody living can make me turn back" (from the freedom highway). She adds, "This last verse (from the American Civil Rights movement) we sing a cappella, slowly and quietly. Very quietly. There isn't a dry eye in the house."

Reaching open-heartedly into the refugee community, GVP created the Women's Wisdom Project, a semester-long experience. Students in language arts classes learned how to conduct interviews, listen, and tell a story. They interviewed family members, discovering illuminating tales and histories about their own relatives they had never before heard.

Each class interviewed a female community leader. Mimi Vold, a Vietnamese refugee who now is a successful human resources director, shared her experiences with the GVP girls, something she had rarely done with other people. Students found that although their ethnicities, languages, and specific journeys were very different, the stories Ms. Mimi told often mirrored their own. The girls used her words verbatim to write their song, "I Believe We Have a Lot in Common."



I Believe We Have a Lot in Common (Song for Ms. Mimi)

Elise notes, "The United States is changing rapidly with the arrival of refugees and immigrants from the many war-torn countries affected by our own policies." The impact of this safe harbor made by music does not escape her. "Here, these young women can acclimate and explore their new environment, the world they will shape into their—and our—future. And I believe that music will be a vibrant part of their new world."

Each year the students perform at Eve Ensler's [One Billion Rising](http://www.onebillionrising.org/about/campaign/one-billion-rising) (<http://www.onebillionrising.org/about/campaign/one-billion-rising>), a global event to end violence against women and girls. Singing with vibrancy and purpose, they are led joyously by their music teacher, "Ms. Elise," singing her song "Break the Silence."

Every successful teacher learns from students as much as teaching them, often in unexpected ways. Elise's community connections and deepening relationships with their families—she lives within five blocks of most of her students—have informed her own work.

"After decades of traveling as a Teaching Artist-in-Residence, I was longing for a more in-depth continuous experience with a music team. The Global Village Project allows me to stay home and become even more deeply rooted in my community." She muses, "It is almost a reversal of my former self, when I was helping Americans to appreciate world music and cultures. Now I'm getting new Americans to learn about their new country. It has made a difference in my own songwriting and recording."

Elise's songs could not be, and are not, only about sound and tone. Rhythm is also omnipresent, beginning and ending, as in life, with the heartbeat. Rhythm and Elise Witt—infectious, intricate, and unexpected—are inseparable. Embodying music as a physical activity, a kinetic experience, Elise, her students and her audiences are constantly moving to the beat, the "offbeat," and the natural vibrations that make dancers of us all.

"Each language has its own rhythm and cadence. When we sing in foreign tongues, it changes us...the way we shape our mouths, use our face muscles, even our body language adapts."

Inspired, she says, by CMN Magic Penny recipient Joanne Hammil and her song "Dreams of Harmony," Elise's recent recordings often layer the multiple rhythms of her students' homelands, creating polyrhythmic sound collages.



I See You With My Heart

Elise Witt: Artist, teacher, choral director, community and human rights activist. She shares her essence, rich with life's constant humming vibrations—sound, movement, human connections—across a multilingual, multicultural, international soundscape. Her work is that of a true, honest, and honorable "People's Artist." There can be no greater accolade.



Break the Silence



Salsa Garden



Earbone



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Building CMN

Preserving the History of the Early Years

by Sarah Pirtle

"We had three things in common—love of children, wanting to help build a world that works, and the belief that songs have power, that you can sing something into existence."

What song did you hear that made you say, "I've never heard a song for children like this!"? Who was the person who first stretched out their hand to you in CMN? What conversation with someone in this network is one you'll never forget?

This is the glue of CMN. When a whole slew of us were first finding each other in the 1980s and forging a community that could be ongoing, there were many steps that made it solid. As I try to put this down in writing, I want us to remember that song, that outstretched hand, that conversation as personal building blocks are crucial to us. I acknowledge and honor them even as I talk about dates and decisions.

The early history of CMN recounts not only people and places, but tells a story of deliberate choices to live out shared values and build a caring community through song. CMN began with an inclusive code of ethics that was consciously created among the thirty to forty people invested in the first years, most of whom are still engaged in our network.

CMN was built from a spirit of welcome. At a CMN gathering in Tennessee, a couple from Florida said, "We came here expecting to be on the sidelines among a bunch of stars, and instead we were welcomed in as equals." It's no accident that Frank Hernandez and Ted Warmbrand's song, "[Open the Circle](#)," has become a CMN anthem, because it gives voice to our commitment that the newest members are important and their gifts need to be recognized and incorporated.

The scene of children's music into which CMN was born in the 1980s had a stream of influences. Educators impacted by folk music, especially by the work of Pete Seeger, were drawing upon folk-based songs for building friendships in the classroom. Fueled by folk and rock music, many young teachers and performers had taken up playing guitar as teenagers. Where once pianos were common in early childhood classrooms, guitars were also now in evidence. Another factor that certainly affected the central founders of CMN was the imprint of music from the civil rights movement; we were also impacted by the anti-Vietnam War movement as well as campaigns to prevent nuclear war,



The first CMN National Gathering, 1991, Litchfield, Connecticut. (photo by Marcia Berman)

foster ecology, and address the inequities of sexism, racism, and ableism. We saw music as a way that children could learn about these points of view. When Pete Seeger sang “My Dirty Stream,” children could hear about the work of the Clearwater movement in cleaning up the Hudson River.

In Canada, children’s music performers like Sharon, Lois, and Bram as well as Raffi focused primarily upon traditional music, while many US performers were creating original music and looking for avenues for sharing it. We wondered how to help songs reach schools, homes, camps, and libraries. Through Mariposa in the Schools in Toronto, Canadian performers received federal support for their work. In the absence of similar government sources, artists in the United States looked for ways to develop mutual support and vehicles for professionalizing our work. The exchange that happened at meetings of adult folk music organizations addressed some of these needs, but none focused on music for children.

Another factor in the background of CMN’s rise was a change in the music industry: famous adult musicians in the United States started adding albums for children. We looked at our music as part of community building, not part of becoming successful in entertainment. We wanted to create a cooperative model rather than fuel a star system, especially since this was in keeping with what our songs were about.

Phil Hoose liked to say, “Our stuff is different from ear candy.” Songwriters drawn to CMN created music that took young people seriously yet had plenty of goofy humor. While a 1950s genre of children’s music instructed them on how to behave—like “never skate where the ice is thin” or “look both ways when you cross the street”—these CMN songs introduced thoughts of caring without being preachy.

“The early history of CMN recounts not only people and places, but tells a story of deliberate choices to live out shared values and build a caring community through song.”

At an evening round-robin CMN song swap, it was exciting to hear songs like “Hey, Little Ant” by Phil and his daughter Hannah. This song blazed trails by raising issues of bullying and helping children develop compassion for the underdog and respect for all life.

The Forerunners

Important forerunners laid the groundwork out of which CMN developed. As CMN started, we investigated who had come before, and reached out to find those who all over the country were doing parallel work.

From the 1950s onward, many folk musicians in the United States performed family concerts of music selected for children. An earlier generation included Malvina Reynolds, Sam Hinton, and Ella Jenkins.

Marcia Berman began making recordings in the 1950s and later teamed up with Patty Zeitlin from the West Coast. As former preschool teachers, they had experience observing children. They created music that showed respect and helped express feelings. For instance, Marcia’s “The Angry Song” gave everyone a chance to sing, “You can’t hurt me, but you can yell a lot.” *Won’t You Be My Friend* and *Everybody Cries Sometimes* were albums they made together. Marcia’s song “I’m Not Small” was interactive. Marcia comments, “I wanted them to feel more power in their lives even in their imagination. It was a time when children had fewer choices.” Patty’s song “Spin, Spider, Spin” invites a child to feel close to spiders and not feel frightened. These kinds of lyrics hadn’t appeared before in the genre of children’s music.

Ruth Pelham founded the [Music Mobile \(http://www.musicmobile.org\)](http://www.musicmobile.org) in 1977 in Albany, New York. By taking her van of instruments and programs for music making out into neighborhoods, she opened up a whole new sense of the potential of music to build community. Her song "Under One Sky" became a beacon because it was both catchy and meaningful as it talked about unity.

Several performers in the late 1970s intertwined social change music with appreciation for traditional music. Nancy Schimmel created distinctive topical songs on political and ecology themes. Sally Rogers became a nationally recognized performer in the folk tradition and later served as CMN president. As part of her body of political music, Bonnie Lockhart, who also became CMN president, wrote "I Still Ain't Satisfied" in 1972 as an anthem for the national women's rights movement. Each of them performed and wrote music for all ages.

Children's radio programming started in the 1970s and early 1980s. PJ Swift's *Pickleberry Pie* began in California. Jeff Brown in Juneau, Alaska had a popular program called *We Like Kids*. They both made contributions to CMN and the field in general as described below.

On the West Coast, Peter Alsop began producing children's music in 1975. An organization called Children's Artists Making a Living (CAMAL) started. Marcia Berman, Uncle Ruthie Buell, Dan Crow, Patty Zeitlin, Mallory Pearce, JP Nightingale, and Charles Krauss were active members of CAMAL. Dan has commented, "CAMAL was instrumental in developing the interest in children's music in Los Angeles beyond animated characters."

In 1981, educator Jill Person started [A Gentle Wind \(http://www.gentlewind.com\)](http://www.gentlewind.com) recording company in Albany, New York with her husband, Donald Person, and they devoted the company to meaningful music for children. Paul Strausman, Ruth Pelham, Betsy Rose, Cathy Winter, Sarah Pirtle, and Lisa Atkinson were among the first artists they recorded by 1984.

In 1986 Evelyn Weiss, Priscilla Prutzman, and Nancy Silber published [Children's Songs for a Friendly Planet \(http://www.worldcat.org/title/childrens-songs-for-a-friendly-planet-kindergarten-through-grade-6/oclc/42234887\)](http://www.worldcat.org/title/childrens-songs-for-a-friendly-planet-kindergarten-through-grade-6/oclc/42234887), a book of peace songs from the Children's Creative Response to Conflict program in Nyack, New York. It included the work of many songwriters who later were part of CMN.

CMN Came Out of PMN

In the early 1980s, Stuart Stotts, Ruth Pelham, Bob Blue, Ben Tousley, Bob Reid, Patricia Shih, Barbara Wright, Phil Hoose, myself, and a number of others from around the United States started attending East Coast gatherings of the folk music organization called Songs of Freedom and Struggle (SFS). Those of us who were singing music for children began meeting informally during those gatherings and organized workshops at SFS where we could learn each other's songs. For instance, Gil Raldiris introduced his song "Mi Cuerpo Hace Musica," and workshop participants helped it to travel.

Out of that interest, Ruth Pelham organized a separate two-day gathering in March 1982 in Albany, New York, along with Jill Person, John Ragusa, Terri Roben, and Cathy Winter, which brought together people who focused on children's music.

Around 1983, SFS merged with People's Music Network (PMN), and the joint

organization went on under the PMN name. The children's song swaps became a scheduled part of the yearly gatherings' programs, and people began being in touch with each other informally between gatherings.

PMNers shared the belief that songs have power, that by singing together with meaningful lyrics a new awareness is brought into being. A song like Stuart Stotts's "World Citizen" illustrated the potential of songs that could awaken children to new, larger possibilities. Patricia Shih's "The Color Song," written in 1984, stirred listeners. Many of the participants began making cassette recordings of their original songs.

Saturday night round-robins and daytime workshops with song swaps—features of CMN conferences—were brought from PMN. We were dedicated to the equality of each and every person, adult and child. In the sequence of a round-robin, a five-year-old might perform after Pete Seeger, and then we'd hear from a children's librarian who used music. This format gave equal weight to each offering.

Engaging young people in social justice and bringing them visions of citizenship was paramount to the founders. We devised ways to write songs with children, and we collected songs that children wrote themselves, like these lyrics written by Amanda Hogen of Syracuse, New York, in 1993, when she was thirteen years old. Amanda sang, "One small voice can change the world alone. One small voice, then another joins along, and all we need is a few more voices, too, and when we're done the whole world will be singing."

“How can the wide range of people dedicated to caring for children through music support each other cooperatively instead of competing?”

The goal of our efforts at the time was more distinct than creating a network of people dedicated to all kinds of children's music. We saw that children became empowered through music to think about global issues and express their own personal concerns. We helped them voice their own thoughts, stand up to show respect for others, and express their caring for the earth. We were trying to get our songs and our teaching methods more widely accessible to children, to schools, and to camp counselors, to help children become empowered voices in our society.

Formal Founding

During a winter PMN conference in Hartford in 1987, the formal organizational launch of CMN happened. On Friday night, instead of listening to the concert in progress, Bob Reid and I stood in the hallway speaking about the idea of starting a CMN, a takeoff of PMN's name. (We didn't realize we were carrying forward ideas that Ruth Pelham, with others, had raised five years earlier. She had organized a roller skating party in Albany to help children's musicians band together.) To test out if others liked the idea, Bob Reid and I called together a Sunday lunch table of children's performers. The group embraced the name of Children's Music Network and wanted it to form parallel to PMN. Ruth, Joanne Hammil, Bob Blue, and Phil Hoose were actively part of this launch. I asked people for ideas about the mission of CMN and took notes. There was easy consensus. Seeing a great need to build upon the momentum, I offered to launch CMN and agreed to set up an office in my home. Over the next years, there were many crucial steps I took that allowed CMN to evolve and develop.

As a first step, I contacted every children's performer in the United States that I'd ever heard of and asked people to give their input. A real turning point was

my correspondence with two people who immediately understood the potential, Sandy Byer from Toronto, Canada, and Marci Berman from Los Angeles, California. Sandy Byer wrote the Kidsbeat column for *Sing Out!* She became an immediate supporter who has continued to be actively involved to this day. Marcia Berman was interested in building a California region CMN. Marcia commented, "That early letter inspired us with a new vision of what was possible. We didn't really know the people on the other coast at this time. Phone calls were expensive, and we didn't have enough contact with each other's music."

As a second step, I created a newsletter to make it all real and tangible and named it *Pass It On!* I instituted its different departments and sections, many of which we still use today. Phil Hoose began a long commitment of creating high-quality interviews with children's musicians. These are available on the CMN website in the *PIO!* archives.

The first editorial was called "Like a Rainforest." It talked about valuing all the many ways adults were connected with children's music—as teachers, radio hosts, parents, songwriters, and performers. I posed this guiding question: How can the wide range of people dedicated to caring for children through music support each other cooperatively instead of competing, as is often the setup in the music industry?

At this stage, people weren't available for separate meetings, so I strategized a way to gather and anchor the fledgling organization. As a third step, that summer of 1987, four months after the Hartford meeting, I asked people to come several hours before the PMN gathering started in order to focus on CMN. We met at Camp Thoreau in Pine Bush, New York. Barbara Wright was there, as well as Sally Rogers, and a circle of maybe twenty people.

Ruth Pelham co-facilitated those meetings, and we worked as a team, building from our shared roots in the feminist peace movement where consensus is used to make decisions. Many people who are still active in the network and have played important roles were in that circle. Sandy Byer traveled from Toronto, and Dave Orleans came from New Jersey.

As a fourth step, that fall I put together the first freestanding CMN gathering independent of a PMN event. It took place in Amherst, Massachusetts, at the Hitchcock Environmental Center. Thirty-five people drove far to attend—like Steve Schuch from New Hampshire and Lorre Wyatt, who was associated with the sloop *Clearwater* (<http://www.lorrewyatt.com/clearwater.html>).

As a fifth step, I fleshed out the idea of creating regions. I reached out to CAMAL to indicate that we on the East Coast wanted to honor and respect all they were already doing so that we could build CMN together. Marcia asked for some guidelines, and I wrote out a booklet about how to found a region. It spoke of ways we kept things equal in PMN and drew upon my decade of involvement with the *Interhelp Network* (<http://interhelpnetwork.org>).

As a sixth step, I raised funds from friends so that I could keep running the



CMN Board Meeting held at the home of Andrea and Ron Stone around 1989. Top row from left: Andrea Stone, Phil Hoose, Barbara Wright, Joanne (Olshansky) Hammil; middle row: Spencer Stone, Marcia Berman, Stephanie Stone; bottom row: Hannah Hoose, Ryan Pirtle-McVeigh, Sarah Pirtle, glasses of Bob Blue. Also at meeting were Ron Stone, Debbie Friedlander, Ruth Pelham.

office. It was another way to expand.

The aim was to create a stable organization to which many could contribute. When PMN met in Beacon, New York in the summer of 1990, the “snowball” got larger and grew into something sustainable by a larger group. This was the first time a wider circle made a commitment to long-term investment. Bob Blue and Phil Hoose both joined the board at this time. This was the “meeting under the tree” that many people still remember as one of the coalescing events. In the next year, 1991, CMN became incorporated and also gained nonprofit status.

Through the work of Marcia Berman, the first West Coast national CMN gathering was organized in Los Angeles in October 1992. Miriam Sherman, Jacki Breger, Tom Armstrong, and Milt and Stefani Rosenberg were part of building the region and the conference. It was a milestone because it brought together a wide variety of singers, and we discovered that people were willing to travel long distances to attend. Ernest Siva gave a very moving presentation about the music of his Serrano and Cahuilla heritage, focused on the traditional indigenous ways of creating from an inner place connected to nature. He told us that by writing new songs and by passing along songs from long ago we were connecting to a common life source.

People Kept Us Moving Forward

That’s a look at the very earliest years when “the boat pushed off from the dock.” I want to highlight crucial work during the first ten years that helped to make us solid. I can’t list all those who regularly attended gatherings, but am focusing upon those who worked year-round. Here’s a short summary.

The first major turning point for CMN occurred when three people came forward as key leaders. Joanne Hammil brought her high standards and smart ways of operating to the network. Although not officially elected president until 1994, she performed the duties of one from 1991 to 1993, and was very active as part of the steering committee, which was the precursor to today’s executive committee.

Andrea Stone and her husband, Ron, took the helm at the office. Those three people really made CMN what it is today. They knew how to do things professionally. Andrea and Ron brought *Pass It On!* to a whole other level—from a photocopied newsletter to a journal that they supervised, edited, and printed. They organized our early independent gatherings, created a computerized member database, reached out to other professional children’s music organizations to forge ties and visibility for CMN, and helped build CMN regions around the country. At that time Andrea worked as a guidance counselor, and she made a recording of CMN songs that she used to help children express their feelings.

Major board meetings began at the Stones’ home in New Jersey in 1989 and continued at Joanne’s in Massachusetts. A core group of people traveled long distances to meet face to face. Young people gave input as members of an advisory committee for some years during this period (since children couldn’t be officially on a board and make corporate decisions). They included Andrea and Ron’s children Spencer and Stephanie, Joanne’s daughter Lisa, Phil’s older daughter Hannah, and my son Ryan. This was the time of long meetings and carefully made decisions about how to keep the organization inclusive and not self-promotional. Barbara Wright was also involved year after year, and some board meetings were held at her home. Joanne worked as the Stones’ right hand, and together they managed to stay on top of all the complex details of

running the organization. These three showed a rare combination of professional know-how, diplomacy, perseverance, and insightful wisdom about human nature.

In 1993 Marge Corcoran was hired to take over some of the tasks that Andrea, Ron, and Joanne handled, such as membership processing and dealing with mail. In 1994 Joanne Tuller took on some of the logistical tasks three hours each week. But we realized that we needed more formal help.

In January of 1995, Caroline Presnell became the office manager, and later the national coordinator, serving through 2010. She had the administrative skills needed to help solidify and undergird the organizational structure and also assist with implementation of board actions. Having paid staff in place for day-to-day tasks lifted some of that burden from board members. The board called Caroline “the Queen” because her good sense, clarity of detail, and impeccable values allowed the network to flourish. Her work with *Pass It On!* began in the autumn of 1995. She began functioning as production editor early on, and continued with that work through 2014. In addition, working with a succession of *PIO!* editors, she often assisted with copyediting.

Think of all the work that took place at any one time behind the scenes—people writing fundraising letters, organizing fundraisers, ironing out conflicts, serving on the board, writing for *PIO!* It is impossible to name all the people who helped build the network in those early days, but I want to single out performers from two other regions not yet mentioned. Three men from Wisconsin—Bruce O’Brien, Tom Pease, and Stuart Stotts—and four women from the Bay area—Bonnie Lockhart, Nancy Schimmel, Lisa Atkinson, and Ingrid Noyes—were crucial in building a bridge toward where we are today. They exemplified the fact that many people were already operating with similar values and would be buoyed up by banding together in a network. Their ability to meet at yearly gatherings in New England and then in California also helped strengthen CMN, and their stellar songwriting opened people’s eyes to what was possible.

Lisa Garrison, who was there at the start, steadily made contributions by grant writing and creating her column, *The Rose and the Apple Tree*, for *PIO!* Bruce O’Brien from Wisconsin and Sue Ribaud from the New York Metro Region organized a large landmark gathering at Camp Kutz near New York City and both continued doing work, with Sue on the board. Dave Kinnoin made an early commitment, and his cookies became a creative way to fundraise at gatherings. Susan Keniston helped maintain *PIO!* while working with Bob Blue and later became editor herself.

PJ Swift was a key person nationally in the field of children’s music radio, and she made it possible for CMN members to get a list of all the children’s radio shows in this country. As her work enlarged, her program—*Pickleberry Pie*, a syndicated public radio program for kids—evolved into the Children’s Music Web and *Kids’ Public Radio* (<http://www.kidspublicradio.org>). Jeff Brown from KTOO Radio in Juneau, Alaska created a book and cassette set of his favorite children’s songs that he played on his *We Like Kids* (<http://www.alaska.net/~jbrown/Jeff-Home/WeLikeKids.html>) programs. Their work in radio helped



Top row, from left: Hannah Hoose, Lisa Olshansky, Stephanie Stone, Sarah Pirtle; middle row: Andi Stone, Spencer Stone, Ruth Pelham; bottom row: Ron Stone, Phil Hoose, Joanne (Olshansky) Hammil, Bob Blue.

give CMN a sense of expansion.

Lisa Atkinson, Bob Blue, Tom Hunter, Jill Person, Miriam Sherman, and Paul Strausman have died, but their integrity and their contributions are woven into what we have become. Their conversations and songs are certainly significant in the tapestry of our organization. Tom Hunter said, "I want my music to be grounded in the realities of what kids and teachers know. I want it to ring true, as it helps people laugh, cry, remember, celebrate, and learn."

“The glue of CMN is not only in the humor, the joy of community, and the sharing of infectious songs. It’s also in the inner tuning fork that keeps us ‘tuning up’ to what is best for the whole.”

What year did you join the network? I don’t want to leave you out. What a difficult task it is to write down this early history, knowing that many names might accidentally not be here. This is a complex story to tell, and I want to respect everyone who had a role in building CMN from the 1980s through the mid-1990s.

Here’s a perspective on longevity. Looking at the number of active members in 2007, twenty percent of that total had joined by 1992; in other words, they had joined in the first five years of CMN and were still involved. Jumping to those who joined between 1992 and 1995, we find many who remained as key contributors to CMN and went on to be board members, past and present. These include Ellen Allard, Beth and Scott Bierko, Katherine Dines, David and Jennie Heitler-Klevans, Mara Sapon-Shevin, Barb Tilsen, and Kim Wallach. Reading those names, you can sense all their contributions that followed and still continue to the present.

Pass It On! invites you to share your recollections, not only about these first ten years, but about the years that followed. I hope more people will write articles to provide other details. I want this initial article, attempting to set down CMN’s complex history in writing, to honor the intangible process of starting a flame that has now continued beyond the twenty-five year mark.

Keeping Our Shared Values

"May the work we do make the world we live in a little more worthy of our children."

—Tom Hunter’s song quoting Pablo Casals

Each CMN Board of Directors meeting used to end with this song by Tom Hunter, as the call would go out to “form the corporate structure” and people gathered in a large hug hold.

I said at the outset that this article is a history of deliberate decisions to maintain values as much as it is a history of the individuals’ involvement. The glue of CMN is not only in the humor, the joy of community, and the sharing of infectious songs. It’s also in the inner tuning fork that keeps us “tuning up” to what is best for the whole.

CMN uses a model of consensus and modified consensus, and has from the outset. We work from a “group brain” instead of working from the limiting territory of our egos and our own personal needs.

We look to make decisions from a place inside us that senses what will serve the greater good. This broad vision of a beloved community of people who respect children has created circles within circles, where the circle is open for

the newest person at the heart of CMN.

Heartfelt thanks to Caroline Presnell for her extensive and invaluable fact checking, editing, and intensive involvement in helping this story be expressed.



The Children's Music Network



An Interview with Frankie and Doug Quimby

The Georgia Sea Island Singers

by Phil Hoose (<http://www.philliphoose.com>)

James Brown, long billed as "The Hardest Working Man in Show Business," has nothing on Frankie and Doug Quimby.

The Quimbys, who are better known as the Georgia Sea Island Singers, work more than 300 days a year, usually performing four to six shows a day, and have been doing so for twenty-five years. Through games, songs, and rhymes such as "Shoo, Turkey," "Hambone," and "Pay Me My Money Down"—all of which originated with slaves on the islands off the coast of Georgia and South Carolina over 200 years ago—they preserve a lively record of the deepest roots of African-American heritage.



(photo by Irene Young)

The Georgia Sea Island Singers first performed in the 1920s for tourists at local hotels on St. Simons Island, one of ten small islands off the Georgia coast. There have been more than a dozen singers in the group at some times, just two or three at others. They were recorded by folklorist Alan Lomax in 1953 and toured the nation for the next two decades under the charismatic leadership of Bessie Jones.

In those years they often performed in aprons and bandannas, which sometimes embarrassed the younger members of the group. Jones ignored the criticism. "I wear them because my grandma wore them and my great-grandma wore them," she said. "I'm proud of them and proud of the way they wanted to be. And this is the way they dressed up when they wanted to go out, and I think they looked beautiful."

End of discussion.

The Sands of Time

The ten sea islands of Georgia are among scores of barrier islands extending from Florida to New Jersey which were formed when currents carrying sand, usually from north to south along the Atlantic Coast, ran into bays turning inward or points of land jutting outward. The flow had to slow down to turn a corner, and the sand dropped to the ocean floor.

Over millennia, the sand deposits built into ever-shifting islands, constantly changing in shape, and separated from the mainland by varying distances. According to Doug Quimby, the water is still so clear around several of the

Georgia islands that “You can see the crabs going right into your basket and you can watch the fish bite your hook.”

Because the Islands were not linked by bridge to the Georgia mainland during the period of slavery, songs and games that had originated in Africa—as well as the oral history of slavery as told by slaves themselves—were isolated and preserved on the Islands with relatively little contamination from mainland culture. So too was their African-based dialect called “Gullah,” still spoken there.

Quimby History

Frankie Quimby, 57, is the oldest of thirteen children. She grew up in a sea island family that traces its lineage back to the Foulahs—a tribe from what is now Nigeria—who were captured and enslaved on plantations along the Georgia coast. Exposed to slave lore from girlhood, she grew up respecting her forebears’ “mother wit” and capacity to endure hardship.

Frankie met Doug Quimby, 58, a sharecropper’s son from Bacontown, Georgia, while he was performing with a gospel quartet on St. Simons Island in 1968. They were married three years later.

They began performing with Bessie Jones in 1969 and took over as the Sea Island Singers when Jones could no longer perform. Their passion is to pass on the story of their slave heritage as a source of pride.

“Our ancestors survived by being strong, creative, and intelligent people,” Frankie says. “I think the children of this generation need to know that.”

The Quimbys Today

The Quimbys live in Brunswick, Georgia, near six of their ten children, most of their thirty-eight grandchildren, and an ever-growing number of great-grandchildren. Doug Quimby is a soft-spoken man who looks a little like Dr. J with salt-and-pepper hair, a long face, and a neat mustache.

Frankie Quimby, animated and intense in conversation, tends to lean forward to tell her story while Doug sits back. Her voice is often filled with passion and conviction. Laughter frequently bubbles to the surface.

This interview took place in the Quimbys’ room in the Tewksbury, Massachusetts Holiday Inn, an hour after the last of their four school performances for the day. Frankie’s stomach growled throughout, but she refused to quit talking about children and history for something as trivial as dinner. (“My stomach’s just noisy anyway... I could be just through eatin’ and it’d be noisy.”)

This was a wonderfully musical conversation, during which Frankie and Doug taught several songs, and Doug sang seven different versions of “Amazing Grace.” In some ways, it was their fifth set of the day.

Our Talk with Doug and Frankie

Where all have you been this week?



DQ: Well, let's see. We were up here in New Hampshire Thursday and did three concerts. Then we went home. We drove all night and got home Saturday about 7:00 am. We did a concert on Keawah Island South Carolina Saturday night, and started back up here Sunday morning about 5:00 am. We drove straight through to Boston and got there about 10:00 pm Sunday night.

We had four shows Monday—two elementary schools in Londonderry, New Hampshire, then a K-8 in Manchester.

Amazing... How many shows do you figure you do in a year?

FQ: Oh, I don't know. Sometimes we do six in a day, like two in the morning, two in the evening, a Boy Scout or Girl Scout at five, and a PTA at seven. You count in festivals, family gatherings, teacher workshops, churches, then schools when in sessions...it must be over a thousand shows a year.

Are you wearing down at all?

FQ: The older you get, the more you know the miles are ticking by. The legs get tired now, the back. We used to be able to just shoot from here to there.

DQ: There's wear and tear everywhere. Like today, after our first concert in Londonderry, I was really tired. But when I got to Manchester and looked into their faces, I was full of energy. I was ready to do some more. They start waving at you, and you wave back, and they're smiling and you're just ready to go. You have to love children to travel this much.

Remembering Bessie Jones

Can you still remember your first show?

FQ: Oh yes. We started out with Bessie Jones in 1969. My first husband was her son. After we were divorced, and me and Doug got together, she knew that Doug could sing. She'd heard him sing in quartets in church. We would fill in for her, because she was always double-booking.

If you called Bessie up and asked her to sing, she'd say, "Yes, send me a ticket." Then if someone else would call for the same day, she say, "Yes, send me a ticket." First ticket to get there, that's who she'd sing for.

Finally I started booking for her. And this double booking was happening all the time. So one day she said, "How 'bout you and Doug and the children going to one and I'll go to the other?"

First time, we caught a bus to Towson, Maryland to sing with Mike Seeger and Bukka White and Hazel Dickens, and Bessie caught another bus to Tennessee to sing with Guy Carawan. That's how we started (laughs).

I've heard so much about Bessie Jones. What was she like?

FQ: She loved people, and especially children. Anybody's children. Before Alan Lomax got her on the road, she would take people's children and raise them. She would take your babies and just keep them if you needed her to. I had never met anybody like her. And that woman could sing! Powerful! She could sing for four hours straight in the sun and it wouldn't bother her.

Just before she stopped traveling, though, her singing voice got really weak. You could hardly understand her. We had to explain the games because the

children couldn't understand her. God, she couldn't deal with it. It just frustrated her so. Her mind was still able but her body was decaying. Singing had been her life. She still needed to do it but it was going away. She couldn't deal with it. She felt useless. She would say "I got to do this! I got to share this! I got to keep goin'!" And her body would say, "Nope."

The Beginnings

How did the Georgia Sea Island Singers get started?

FQ: About a hundred years ago this group started out with just the people on the Island singing for tourists. There was a white woman, Miss Lydia Parrish, who wrote *Songs of the Sea Islands*. She would let the black people come to her house and sing for tourists. Finally she bought an old slave cabin, and tourists could come down and hear slave songs sung where they had been sung. Then after a while the hotels caught on and saw it was good business.

How did Bessie Jones get involved?

FQ: Bessie wasn't from the Island, but she started going there in 1919. Finally the people who lived there asked her to sing with them because they'd heard her singing in church. It was quite an honor, since islanders do not ask outsiders to sing with them. She must have been singing up a storm!

Then Alan Lomax went to St. Simons in 1953 to interview people and record singers and he singled out Bessie. One reason was that she would talk to him and tell him about the songs and games and history, which she had learned from her grandfather and the island people. The others wouldn't talk. They still clam up.

Bessie finally got the others to travel with her. Up to then they had been called "The Coastal Singers." There were about fifty of them, from all the surrounding islands. From Camden County and Mackintosh and Liberty Counties. And Miss Bessie could not master the Island culture, so finally she sent for them.

And when they came, it became "Bessie Jones and the Georgia Sea Island Singers."

Then in later years they stopped going and Miss Bessie asked me and Doug to go. That's how she got us going, in 1969.

“And they would still try to run away. And the slave owners couldn't understand it. 'Why?' they would say. 'We're being so good to them.'”

Roots

Are you able to trace your own ancestry back to Africa?

FQ: I can. My people were from the town of Kianah in the District of Temourah in the Kingdom of Massina, which was on the Niger River. When we needed some biography on me, we went to the Hopeton-Altama Plantation, where my people were slaves. They brought them from Africa to the Islands and unloaded them.

Some were taken to Brunswick, to the plantation, eight miles across the bridge to the mainland. Some were taken south to Camden County and some were taken north to Mackintosh County. They brought some to Brunswick, to Hopeton-Altama Plantation. They were slaves there. We went to those records

and found a list of slaves. We found one of my ancestors; her name was Frankey. They wouldn't let her use her African name, so they spelled her name F-R-A-N-K-E-Y. By the time it got to me in the 1930s, it was FRANKIE. We've got a relative that's a hundred years old today whose name is Frankey. It was my great-great-great grandfather that was brought to Hopeton-Altama.

These are rice plantations, not cotton, right?

FQ: Yes, and that was very important. You see, cotton was king on those plantations at first. But they found that the slaves that were taken from the coast of Sierra Leone knew how to grow rice. So they converted the plantations to rice to make more money.

But you grow rice in water and muck. That breeds mosquitoes, and mosquitoes caused malaria.

Most slaves were immune to malaria because of the sickle cell, but the white plantation owners were not. The slaves were giving malaria to the owners, so the owners would leave the plantations along the sea islands to black overseers for nine months of the year, during the growing season. After the Civil War ended they gave the land to the blacks, because whites couldn't live there. It wasn't like the mainland, where sharecropping set in.

So if a cure for malaria had not been found, the Georgia Sea Islands would still be inhabited mostly by blacks even today?

FQ: Probably.

Was slavery less harsh there than in the uplands because the whites were gone?

FQ: Yes. The history and culture of slavery survive better there than anywhere else because the owners were usually gone and those people could keep up their African ways. They could eat good and practice their native language. Who was gonna tell when the owner came back? They could grow food, and even when the slave owners were there they could catch things out of the water at night.

DQ: And it is known that Glenn County was the only place in all the South where a slave was not allowed to be whipped. They could be punished severely, but not whipped.

FQ: The older people told us that. And they said there was a preacher who would go around from plantation to plantation and ask the slaves, "Are you being treated all right?" And some slaves were allowed to visit their friends and relatives on other plantations.

But they still weren't free...

FQ: That's right. And they would still try to run away. And the slave owners couldn't understand it. "Why?" they would say. "We're being so good to them." But nobody wants to be owned by anyone. Nobody wanted to be a slave.

Doug, can you also trace your heritage back to Africa?

DQ: No, I wasn't born on the coast like Frankie; I grew up upland around Albany, Georgia. When I was coming up a lot of the old people didn't say much. They didn't know it was valuable. I didn't understand until after my

granddaddy died that he was from South Carolina and that he spoke Gullah. We all just said, "Pa talk funny." We didn't ask why.

We didn't ask why. He'd say, "The sun is shayning," and "Geed up bo" for "Get up boy." Now I know he was speaking Gullah. Then later when I came to the coast and I heard a lot of it, everyone talked that way. Granddaddy died before I could ask him about it. But he was a Geechee (laughs).

Starting Young

Did you sing professionally before you joined the Sea Island Singers?

DQ: (Laughs.) My first paying job came when I was four. I grew up on a plantation out in the country. The overseer's mother, a white lady, heard me singing and fell in love with the sound of my voice. Every Saturday we would drive into town in the overseer's truck to shop. The glass between the cabin and the truck bed was broken out, so you could hear through. She wanted me to stand in the back of the truck and sing to her though the broken glass all the way into town. I sang a song about "My Mother's Dead and Gone," and she would cry all the way into town.

When we got to town she'd wipe my eyes and give me a quarter. That quarter was big money. I could go into the store and get a drink and some crackers for a dime. There was still money left over, and during the week I'd spend the rest when the rolling store came—that was a truck with a little house built over the back. It would carry meat and rice and perishable goods and also candy. I would come by on the plantation and I'd spend the rest.

How'd it make you feel to be able to make this woman cry?

DQ: I didn't know for sure why she was crying. Then later I realized maybe her mother really was dead and gone. She loved her mother; I guess the song really brought it out. We'd come back to the country in the evening when it cooled down and she'd have me sing it all the way back. And she would cry all the way back, too. And during the week when she wanted a good cry she'd send her grandson to our house to come get me and I'd sing it to her then. After a while she'd rise up from her chair and say, "That's enough," and she'd give me wheat bread and syrup. That's the truth. That was my first paying singing job (laughter).

The Singing Style

Doug's voice is just amazing to me. So rich and powerful. Most people's voices would have given out long before the fourth show.

FQ: I know what you're saying. I always think, I *know* Doug's people came over on that boat because Doug can sing so far. Like when they took the drums away they would sing on one plantation and you could hear it on another. And Doug could stand here and open his mouth and sing and you could hear him a long ways away. He overpowers microphones sometimes. He has to move it out of the way in small rooms because he would blow 'em out of there if he used it (laughter).

DQ: Well, years ago when I started singing with gospel quartets we didn't have microphones. You had to really put out. Then, following a mule out in a field, singing out in the open all the time, I developed my lungs. I very seldom get hoarse. Once every three or four years.

Did you want a career in gospel music?

DQ: When I was real young I used to imagine myself singing in a little quartet like the Soul Stirrers or the Blind Boys of Mississippi. And I used to have a vision a long time ago. I would be back in the field where I worked, near the woods, almost to a fishing hole where we'd fish if it rained. I would be plowing, and I could imagine myself singing to thousands and thousands of people in an open clearing.

And you know, it actually happened. Frankie and I went to Eureka Springs, Arkansas for a festival. And we were on a big huge stage right like at the bottom of a mountain. And I could see people just as far up that mountain as my eye could see and as far to either side. And all behind me. The vision had happened.

Delivering Important Messages

You have preached a positive message for so long now, telling young African-Americans especially to be proud of their heritage and of the resilience of their ancestors during slavery. But I wonder if the horror of slavery ever sweeps over you personally?

FQ: With me it doesn't that much, because I've never had to endure hardship. But Doug has. Doug grew up sharecropping in Southwestern Georgia. Eight people grew up together and made \$9.25 for a whole year. Doug knew about getting up early in the morning to plow. He knew what it was like to be treated bad before Dr. King came and after Dr. King came. But I was born and raised on the Georgia Sea Islands. I had it better. The ocean gave us food and the old ways had survived. That helped. I don't know what it is to be hungry, or to work and not get paid.

DQ: Sometimes I think about it but I don't let it get me down. Once a guy took all the money I had made in a whole year. I got to thinking about how hard I had worked for that money. I had worked in the fields all day long in that hot sun. Then at night the dew would start falling and I'd have to hook the plow up to the duster and dust the cotton fields with poison to kill the boll weevils, especially on nights when the moon was shining. I'd work till eleven or twelve at night. Then I'd go get some sleep till four or five and dust some more till the sun came up and made the leaves too dry for the poison to stick to them. I would let it get me down until Christ came into my life.

Another thing that helped me through was that I saw that whites were treated bad too. Poor whites that were sharecropping. I'm not talking about what I heard someone else say. This is experience that I seen for myself. They worked hard like we did. I used to play with white children and work with them and sing with them and my mother and the mother of one boy I worked with cooked together and we would eat together. At twelve o'clock we'd leave the fields and everybody went home and ate. It was like a big family.

“Do it right. Don't change it. If you change it, it takes away from why the ancestors made up the games and songs.”

Respecting Tradition

How important is it to you that the games and songs that developed during slavery be performed faithfully, with historical accuracy?

FQ: I want performers and music teachers to do it right. Don't change it. If you change it, it takes away from why the ancestors made up the games and songs. Try to find out why, and the real way to do it. Don't add something on because you can't do it like that. If you're going to teach it or record it or put it in a book, try to find out the real way that they did it. I've heard people say, "Oh well, in folk music it don't matter if you change it...." That's not true! It does matter.

DQ: That's right. When we do things we do it exactly the way we were taught that slaves did it. Once we were out in California and we saw a teacher having the children doing "Draw Me a Bucket of Water" sitting down. How you gonna jump around in a ring sayin' "Frog in the bucket and you can't get him out" when you're sitting down?

FQ: They did that song when they were entertaining slave owners on a Sunday evening. They had to put a lot of action and a lot of rhythm into it. Sometimes we'll go in behind someone else who has taught them differently, and the kids'll say, "Well, I thought there was something wrong...it didn't make sense that way."

The "Comfortable" Dance

I understand you know how the Charleston got started.

DQ: The Charleston was originated from a slave dance called "Jump for Joy." You see, the slaves were not allowed to cross their legs unless they were performing a game or dance for the overseers. Because crossing your legs meant you were comfortable. Slaves were supposed to be submissive at all times. So they invented a dance that gave them a chance to cross their legs in front of the master and the overseer.

It was beautiful, so they called it "Jump for Joy." Years later, as things began to change, someone saw the same dance down in Charleston, South Carolina. Little finger pop, little body twist, and they renamed it "The Charleston."

When did you first hear that story?

FQ: That was an old story. It was said before it was published. Same with the song "All of God's Children Got Shoes." They were saying, "I got shoes, You got shoes, all of God's children got shoes. When I get to heaven, gonna put on my shoes and gonna walk all over God's heaven."

They didn't have shoes. But they were saying, when I get to heaven I'm gonna have a pair of shoes. They'd be entertaining the slave owners on Sunday, dancing as they were singing. And they'd get in front of the owners and sing, "Everybody talkin' 'bout heaven ain't goin' there," and they would kind of point over their shoulders at the owners. The owners didn't know they were talking about them.

Singing for the World

Have you ever had a chance to sing in Africa, for African children?

FQ: We did a concert at Freetown University in Sierra Leone. The children were receptive, but I had thought they would know the songs and games that our ancestors did when they got to America. It turned out those songs and games were made up after our people got to America, to express how they felt

and to talk to slaveowners through songs and games.

The children didn't know our songs and games, but they did recognize some rhythms we were doing. For example, there was something in a lot of songs and games that we learned to call "Shout." But when we performed it in Africa, they said, "Oh, you do Gumby." That's what they called it.

And another thing was the slaves on the Georgia Sea Islands processed rice by hand. They didn't have machinery. And we still do it for tourists, pound the rice by hand. We demonstrated that in Sierra Leone in '89 for the United Nations. And they said, "How do these Americans know how to beat rice?" They still do it by hand there. They were shocked. In America, the slaves just left it on record for us as "The Rice Dance." And when we got to Sierra Leone, they told us the name of it.

History Can Build Pride

As you present slave material to children in the United States, do you find that some African-American children are embarrassed to be reminded of their heritage as slaves?

FQ: It's getting better. There are still places where there's embarrassment. But because of performers going in, because of PTAs and PTOs trying to make them aware of all the different cultures, now they seem to be more aware. There are still some children that will hold their heads down until they get into the program and they see that their peers are enjoying it. Then they get to enjoy it. A lot of it is because of the effort that performers and sponsors make.

Have children changed much in twenty-five years?

DQ: Some children, especially in the city schools, can get a little rough now. They can be noisy, and play while you're performing. You gotta constantly tell them, "Boys and girls, be quiet." This doesn't happen outside the cities.

FQ: Children are children no matter where you go, but you have to use different techniques now. Now, you have to say, "We've represented the United States in Lillehammer, and in Africa... We were on Nickelodeon Television. You have to impress them before you start, so they don't think you're so dumb. You have to do this to get their attention sometimes. Years ago you didn't have to do this.

The Next Generation

Are you going to try to keep the Georgia Sea Island Singers going when you're done?

FQ: Yes, we are training the children and grandchildren now. Our children are all grown now. They had traveled with Bessie Jones when they were young. For years we had been beggin' them, "Start back." Finally we said, "Look, we're getting older. We can't do this forever. You need to come back and learn over again, and take up where you left off."

Finally, two years ago, a light went off in two of them's heads. One day they said, "When you all gonna train us? You said you were." I said to Doug, "Doug, are these the same ones we been beggin' for years?" Now they're ready to go.

They went to Wolf Trap with us last month and to Chattanooga at the National

Storytelling Festival. They go. Now they can't go enough. Something happened in their minds, they saw that it was all gonna be lost if they didn't go.

Do the grandchildren go too?

FQ: They go from the time they're two years old to the time they're thirteen. Then they start liking boys. Or they get in middle school and they get shy; they don't want their peers to see them doing something. They find excuses. Then after they're fifteen they're ready to go back again. We use them to demonstrate games like "Shoo Turkey."

Did you ever try to train children as apprentices that were outside of your family?

FQ: Oh yes, we try to train all children. In middle schools, at the end of a concert, when there is question and answer, I ask them to tell me, would you like to do this for a living?

Most of the time they say yes. They want to know how much money they could make.

Did any child ever keep at it, and pester you to let them go along with you?

FQ: They have asked us to go with us, but we're on the road so much that you can't carry them. But I'll tell you, it's beginning to bother me again, and I wonder, "What child out of all our children, and what child in the next generation, is going to do what we did?" It takes dedication.

DQ: It takes love.

A Loving Motivation

Why is the love in you?

FQ: (leaning forward) God, we just love it! This is where we come from. We are the generation that had to make it survive and we don't want to see it die. If it dies we're in trouble. I'm a firm believer that you don't know where you're going until you realize where you've come from. Then you can appreciate your education and where you're trying to go in life. This is us.

Even when we're with children, it makes them proud when we say, "MC Hammer didn't create rap. Our ancestors were rapping on those plantations about what was happening in their generation. It's just that today's rapping has taken up and blown it out of proportion, saying wrong words and stuff." It seems to make our children proud when you say the slaves were rapping. They're not ashamed.

When we do hambone, and we say that the slaves created hambone because their drums were taken away and they used their bodies to make music...the kids just listen. It sends a bell. It makes them proud. It gives them a sense of who they are and where they come from. It's important for us to keep going.

What do you want white children to learn from your concerts?

FQ: I feel like we should be aware of each other's culture and heritage. White people should be aware of our heritage and culture. Then they could understand us better. Same with us and you.

We're thrilled that you're going to be with us at our CMN gathering. I know you'll talk much more then, but I wonder, for now do you have any advice for those of us who are just beginning to use music to work with children?

FQ: Over the years we've learned some tricks. Take hambone. At first they were shy and we'd keep tellin' them to do it. Now we tell the kids *not* to do it. To put their hands on their laps and keep 'em there because that way they'll be sure not to do it. To lock them together and keep them locked and put them on their lap 'cause that way they'll be double sure.

Just watch and listen. Their little hands'll be clutched together and they'll still be tryin' to do it. They can't stand it. And after the concert we'll see 'em in the hall, poppin' their mouths and tryin' it.

DQ: I think it's most important to really like children. I just like working with children. Even when I was coming up as a teenager I had a cousin that had a baby and I would walk two or three miles over to her house just to hold that baby.

It just gives me such a thrill to look into their smiling faces. Children generate energy in me.

FQ: Bessie used to say this same thing years ago when we started. We were in our twenties, and we didn't know what she was talking about. But now we do.

Children are so important. They can wear you out, but they give you back more.

Children can wake up something in you that's been dead a long time.

We Wish to Sing to You

traditional song from Georgia Sea Islands

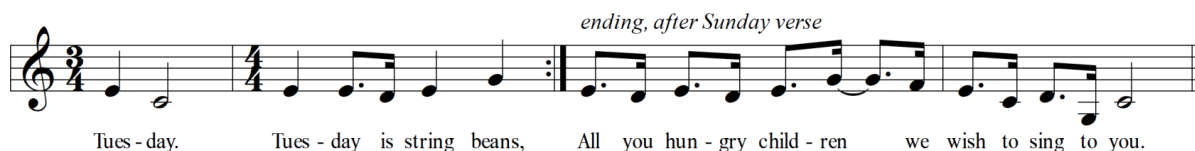
Frankie and Doug Quimby (The Georgia Sea Island Singers) often use this song as an introductory piece for their concerts. Many songs from the islands are used to teach children facts: counting, the alphabet, times tables, etc. Most, as in this song about the days of the week, teach the numbers or words both forward and backward!

We Wish to Sing to You

The image shows the musical notation for the song 'We Wish to Sing to You'. It consists of two staves of music in 4/4 time. The first staff has a key signature of one flat (Bb) and a common time signature of 4/4. The melody is written on a treble clef. The lyrics are: 'To - day is Mon - day, to - day is Mon - day. Mon - day bread and but - ter. All'. The second staff continues the melody with the lyrics: 'you hun - gry child - ren we wish to sing to you. To - day is Tues - day, to - day is'. The time signature changes to 3/4 at the end of the second staff.

To - day is Mon - day, to - day is Mon - day. Mon - day bread and but - ter. All

you hun - gry child - ren we wish to sing to you. To - day is Tues - day, to - day is



Today is Wednesday, today is Wednesday.
 Wednesday is soup —, Tuesday is string beans,
 Monday bread and butter.
 All you hungry children we wish to sing to you.

Today is Thursday, today is Thursday.
 Thursday is roast beef, Wednesday is soup —,
 Tuesday is string beans, Monday bread and butter.
 All you hungry children we wish to sing to you.

Today is Friday, today is Friday.
 Friday is fish —, (etc.)

Saturday is pay day

Sunday is church day

*(Each verse adds another day, then sings backward through the days
 of all the previous verses.)*

Further Resources on the Quimbys and Gullah Traditions

<http://www.pbslearningmedia.org/resource/vtl07.la.ws.style.quimby/frankie-quimby-of-sapelo-island> (<http://www.pbslearningmedia.org/resource/vtl07.la.ws.style.quimby/frankie-quimby-of-sapelo-island>)

<http://today.uconn.edu/2014/10/singers-keep-gullah-traditions-alive>
 (<http://today.uconn.edu/2014/10/singers-keep-gullah-traditions-alive>)

<http://www.gacoast.com/navigator/quimbys.html> (<http://www.gacoast.com/navigator/quimbys.html>)

Originally published in Issue #21, Fall 1995.



The Children's Music Network

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Bedside Bridges Earning My Bronx Cheer

by Jackson Gillman

While most of my work is obviously public, some is very private. I've visited about a dozen different children's hospitals in California, Ohio, Illinois, Maryland, Virginia, and Washington, DC, under the auspices of [Pickleberry Pie, Inc](http://www.kidspublicradio.org/annualreport/annrep14.pdf) (<http://www.kidspublicradio.org/annualreport/annrep14.pdf>). Those engagements often include bedside visits with children who can't join the group shows. These are very delicate, unpredictable opportunities to build a bridge to a child who might be very hard to reach. I'll use my best intuition for what to pull from my bag of songs and fingerplays. Things in the room might give clues as to what the child is interested in, and sometimes the child is able to tell me. I try to read and follow any cues, stay aware of what is working and what isn't, and change tactics accordingly. While this work can be trying and unsettling, it can also be very gratifying and heartwarming.



(photo by Kelli Thomas)

It can be especially challenging when I'm not even allowed to get close to the child, let alone touch him or her. Hospitals require that I be, and have been, in good health before I'm allowed in, and that my hands are sanitized before I enter each room. And the concern about infection goes both ways. I remember one boy who was very wired, literally and figuratively, with monitors all over his scalp. I was reaching him; he was responsive and talkative. Then he signaled quietly for me to come closer and I intuited that he wanted to whisper something privately to me while his mother sat nearby. I put my ear close to him. He leaned into me and planted a loud, slobbery raspberry on my cheek. It was certainly not what I was expecting. The nurse and mother were mortified, but I laughed and said that I would take that as a love buzz. When his mother told me that was a playful ritual he had with his uncle, I knew that I had interpreted it correctly. I consider that intimate Bronx cheer an ovation.

As I do after all my performances, when I leave a hospital, I make a point to think about what I might do differently to improve connections. Making myself actually write down these critical "reviews" helps me be better prepared in the future and deepen the minstrel tool bag I carry with me. It is a very different kind of toolkit than a visiting doctor's bag, but it's well documented how therapeutic smiles and laughter can be.

I've left many a bedside visit feeling that I've "done good" but usually no one other than the child knows for sure. So it was a delightful surprise when I just happened to come across a blog entry written by Kelli Thomas that

documented such a visit very sweetly. I had not even been aware that the grandmother, Kelli, was watching or taking photos. What touched me most in an e-mail exchange afterwards was her telling me that it was the first time that her grandson had smiled during her visit. With Kelli's permission, below is an excerpt from [Quietly Blogging](http://kelli-thomas.blogspot.com/2015/04/special-ride.html) (<http://kelli-thomas.blogspot.com/2015/04/special-ride.html>). It captures why I will continue to seek opportunities to brighten a child's hospital stay, always learning as I go.

We often feel like we're traveling alone—that's why we pick up strangers along the way. Meet Jackson Gillman. Also known as the Stand-Up Chameleon! Once a stranger, and now a fellow traveler on this ride with our Special One. He gave Aidan his first smile of the day as he sang silly songs and used Aidan's body as an instrument.

Tapping on his fingers, playing his ribcage, knocking on his knees. He used Aidan's hands to tell a story using each finger as a member of a family who ended up living in Aidan's heart.

Incidentally, the songs that I remembered using during this particular visit were learned from my association with the Children's Music Network. They included "Finger Family" (traditional), "There's a Little Wheel Turning in my Heart" (African-American folk song), and "Belly Like a Bongo" by Monty Harper and Mr. Billy. Kelli writes, "This was music therapy at its storytelling best. What a wonderful human being. I'm so glad we crossed paths."



(photo by Kelli Thomas)



The Children's Music Network



Creating Safe Musical Spaces

Teaching and Performing for Integrated Audiences

by Joanie Calem

It is likely we have all noticed that the range of behaviors exhibited by children in our classes and performances has changed over the years. As of March 2014, the rate of autism in the United States school population is thought to be 1 in 68 children (Autism Society 2015 (<http://www.autism-society.org/what-is/facts-and-statistics>)). My son is on the autism spectrum. When he was born in 1995, autism was still considered a rare disorder, occurring only in about 1 in 3,300 children. In 2000, the figures were 1 in 150 children; in 2008, 1 in 88 children; in 2012, 1 in 50 (current figures correct that number to 1 in 68 children as listed above) (Blumberg et al 2013 (<http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/nhsr/nhsr065.pdf>)). In addition to a virtual explosion in the rates of autism, as of 2011, approximately 11% of the American children ages four to seven (6.4 million children) have been diagnosed with attention deficit disorder/attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADD/ADHD). The percentage of children with an ADHD diagnosis has increased over recent decades, from 7.8% in 2003 to 9.5% in 2007 and 11.0% in 2011 (Visser et al 2015 (<http://www.jpeds.com/article/S0022-3476%2815%2900138-9/pdf>)).

There is a lot of controversy over what is causing the rise of ADHD and autism. A very heated debate rages, with those who believe that environmental causes and exposure to toxins is causing the rise on one end, and those that believe there actually is no rise, just better diagnosis now than in the past on the other end. Exploring the actual causes of these phenomena is outside the scope of this article, but we, as the people working directly with children, are the ones who must incorporate practices that will accommodate this new reality.

I am both a performer and a teacher. In every one of my public performances, I scan the audience to see who might find certain activities challenging. There is a particular look that I recognize: children who may not feel comfortable making eye contact, who obsess about details of a song, who are distressed by certain rhythms, who are upset by the silliness or illogic of a story, who can't sit still, who flap their hands or heads in time to my guitar strum, who are fearful of things that are of no consequence to most, including random noises. I'm cognizant, too, of children who howl when asked to participate in a round because the contradicting melodies cause them psychic pain, or attack my



guitar while I am playing because they love guitars, or who tear puppets out of my hands because they truly believe that they can take whatever they want. The list goes on and on, but I know that these behaviors are not necessarily the result of bad parenting or spoiled children; they occur most often because the child is wired differently.

I teach music in five large preschools and at a private elementary school that prides itself on providing a safe space for all types of learners. Every grade in the elementary school has one to three children on the special needs spectrum. Every preschool class has one to two children who are clearly wired very differently. Of my seventeen private instrumental students, two are diagnosed with pervasive developmental disorder (PDD), an umbrella term currently used by pediatricians to encompass the various forms of autism.

So how do we embrace neurologically diverse audiences and classrooms? I often come home from a day of teaching or performing with more questions in my head than answers. Every teacher has to figure out how to diversify lessons in a manner that will communicate respectfully to the entire class, and children's performers likewise need to be prepared for audience members who may have unexpected responses to a variety of stimuli. It is an ongoing challenge. I have spent my performing and teaching career attempting to provide the "perfect" musical experience for whoever is in the audience or classroom, "perfect" being defined, by me, as an experience that can touch and engage the soul of everyone present. Perhaps a tall order, but one that I believe is doable.

“As musicians and teachers, we literally need to think on our toes, figuring out who are the people in front of us, what they need, and what will help them gain the most from the musical experience we strive to share with them.”

Out of necessity, I have gained a lot of experience in identifying and encompassing individuals with unique neurological needs over my thirty-year career. I began teaching music in Israel in 1984 and immediately noticed that each of my students excelled at something different. Teaching music the way I had been taught—in a linear, cognitive fashion—was not reaching all of them. Though young and new to teaching, I was observant enough to know that I needed to implement something different. My first discovery was the Suzuki system, which teaches children to play an instrument by ear, therefore allowing my first student—identified with severe dyslexia ten years after I first taught her—to play beautiful piano music and not be held back by an inability to follow the written notes. Neither she, her mother, nor myself knew that dyslexia was the issue, but I did know that she couldn't learn note reading the way her sister did.

My next discovery was on a visit to the United States, when I stumbled across *In Their Own Way* (http://www.institute4learning.com/books_videos.php), a book by Thomas Armstrong. It was definitely put into my hands by the "book gods" (do you all have them in your life as well?) because it was my first exposure to Harvard professor Howard Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences, and immediately informed my teaching from that point on. Briefly, [Howard Gardner](http://howardgardner.com/multiple-intelligences) (<http://howardgardner.com/multiple-intelligences>) originally identified seven styles of learning, or "intelligences," in his 1983 book, *Frames of Mind* (http://www.goodreads.com/book/show/294035.Frames_Of_Mind): visual-spatial, bodily kinesthetic, musical, interpersonal, intrapersonal, linguistic, and logical-mathematical. Naturalistic, existential, and moral learning styles were added later. My takeaway: Every lesson can be taught in a way that reaches out to multiple learning styles.

Experienced teachers quickly observe what teaching methods reach their students, and can modify and adapt their teaching styles. Obviously, a song can be taught by singing it. This reaches aural learners; giving out an illustrated lyric sheet or notation reaches visual learners; teaching with a movement game reaches kinesthetic learners. Identifying the rhythms in a song reaches the mathematical learners; asking the audience to reflect on the meaning of the song reaches intrapersonal learners; and asking the class to discuss the meaning of the song reaches interpersonal learners. And a song, simply by being a song, reaches musical learners.

Even with all of that diversity in teaching methods, I have found over the years that children in my classes who have autism most often benefit from more specific interaction: some of them would simply sit and dream if I didn't reach out to them. Others, like my son, who has autism, ADHD, and sensory processing disorder, need specific support to maintain body control in movement and games so they don't get physically overstimulated. Many of these children are very sensitive to sound, and certain sounds in music class actually cause them pain, in which case headphones help. Making verbal instructions short but clear is helpful to everyone, but crucial to children with aural processing challenges.

We all know that each child is a unique packet of personality, and there aren't any guidelines for best practices that can be plunked down as recipes that will work in every situation. With so much neurodiversity and diverging needs, creating safe group experiences is challenging. As musicians and teachers, we literally need to think on our toes, figuring out who are the people in front of us, what they need, and what will help them gain the most from the musical experience we strive to share with them. Michael Riera, PhD, suggests that when faced with socially challenging behavior, we as adults can remind ourselves to "H.A.L.T." before we act: Is the child "too Hungry, too Angry, too Lonely, or too Tired" to engage in the activity that we are attempting to share with them (Riera 2004 (https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/1057893.Uncommon_Sense_for_Parents_with_Teenagers))? I truly believe that every behavior has a reason, and every individual has an optimal means of engaging with the world. As the adult in the situation, I believe I have the responsibility to help the child find their way back to comfortable behavior. I have found that incorporating Gardner's premise of multiple intelligences into every performance and classroom has helped me be more successful in reaching the children (and adults!) in front of me in whatever context I find myself in.

In that vein, I turned a story written by George Reavis, "[The Animal School](http://agsc.tamu.edu/384/AnimalSchool.pdf)" (<http://agsc.tamu.edu/384/AnimalSchool.pdf>), into a song that I share with both children and adults. When he wrote this fable in the 1940s, Reavis was assistant superintendent of the Cincinnati Public Schools system.

Everybody's Good at Something (<http://www.cdbaby.com/cd/joaniecalem3>)
by Joanie Calem
© 2013, Joanie Calem



Back in the day, when critters went to school,
They learned to run and climb and fly and swim in the pool.
Everyone was good at one or two things,

But there was no one that was good at everything.

Duck was good at swimming, and could sort of fly,
But she just couldn't run, though she really tried.
Instead of letting her swim, and do what she does best
They made her work on running and she failed every test!

Eagle was best at flying up high,
But he just couldn't climb, though he really tried.
He got punished when he flew to the treetop.
They called him "cheater" and made him stop!

Rabbit was great at running and she won every race.
But she was forced to go swimming and she couldn't even place.
In fact it was so bad she kind of broke down,
And after that she couldn't even hop across the town.

Squirrel could climb and run real well
But flying was harder, he just couldn't excel.
If he started in the tree, he could kind of fly down,
But they made him try starting from the ground.

The prairie dogs' parents complained to the school
Lessons didn't include digging or tunnel tools.
So they went and found a teacher on their own.
Badger was glad to teach the pups at home.

Now it's the end of the year; everyone feels bad
'Cause they spent all their time trying to do what they can't.
It's true it's good to learn new things,
But we need to realize no one's good at everything!
We gotta remember no one's good at everything!
And it's just fine that no one's good at everything.

Many CMN members chart similar waters combining teaching and/or performing, and therefore come across the same populations that I see in *my* world. I would love to hear your thoughts and what has worked in *your* world. In the fall issue of *PIO!* I will have the pleasure of presenting Part 2 of this article, highlighting the work of CMN members Andrea Green and Frank Hernandez. Stay tuned!



The Children's Music Network



Music and Inclusion

Building a Vision Through Song

by Mara Sapon-Shevin (<http://soe.syr.edu/about/member.aspx?fac=76>)

"Metal mouth" "freckle face"
"fatso" "four eyes"

Many people's memories of school include rejection, isolation, teasing, and exclusion. They remember the groups they were not allowed to be in, the child who was different who was teased unmercifully, the private snickers and not so private jokes about children who were poor, didn't have the "right" clothes, came from non-standard families or whose academic skills either lagged behind or were far ahead. Is this what schools have to be like? Are there other possibilities? How can we hold up a different vision to the world?



My work is in the area of what is called "full inclusion": how to create classroom settings that meet the needs of all children (regardless of ability/disability) within one, unified setting. Full inclusion is about classrooms which celebrate diversity and nurture and support all members—places in which differences are not ignored, but do not become the excuse for teasing or exclusion. "Full inclusion" is a significant step beyond "mainstreaming" which often required that the child change or be "ready" to be part of a regular classroom. Inclusion asks us, as teachers, administrators, and parents, to make "regular classrooms" warm and accepting places. But this is a challenging vision to accept when many people's personal experiences are so different from this "ideal" one. Some people have given up on the possibility that schools can be different, even if they wish they were.

Although most of the settings in which I give speeches and presentations are "educational" and not "musical," I begin every presentation or workshop with a song. Often, I teach the entire group "Love Grows One by One" by Carol Johnson. First I teach the signs, and then the song, and by the second verse, "So let me take your hand my friend, we'll each take the hand of another, hand in hand we'll reach round the world to our sisters and our brothers," the whole group is holding hands and singing. We often stop to applaud ourselves—an assemblage of people who had no idea that they would be singing, who have together produced a joyous and powerful sound. Then I ask, "Why did I start with a song?" People offer different responses: "Because we should be singing with children?" "Because singing is a universal language?" "Because it got us all involved?" "Because it

“Singing is a way of giving voice to our deepest beliefs and passions, of putting not just into words, but into music, messages that need to be shared.”

builds community?" I respond affirmatively to each of these, because they are all true, but I have another message as well. "How many of you," I ask, "would be willing to come up here and lead the next song?" There are always several brave hands raised. "Thank you for your honesty," I continue, "Now, I'd like the same honesty for this next question: How many of you would rather die first?" Always there is nervous laughter and lots of hands shoot up. I then continue, "For those of you who said you would rather die first, here is my question: What would it take for you to be comfortable coming up here to sing? What would it take?"

The ensuing discussion is always rich, as people talk about not having to do it alone, knowing people in the group better, and, always, assurances that no one would laugh, that they would not be made fun of, isolated, teased, or embarrassed in any way. In other words, in order to take the risk of singing, they would want some sense of safety. They would want the safety of a supportive community, would want to be surrounded by people who would appreciate their effort no matter its quality, celebrate their successes, and offer support and encouragement. The vision becomes clearer—if we, as an audience want this kind of safety, need this kind of safety, in order to take risks and learn and grow, isn't this exactly what children need as well? Ah—an inclusive, nurturing classroom. We have just defined it. Children need the support of an inclusive classroom in order to learn, and adults need support and community in order to work for educational and societal change.

Singing together is about creating community, and it is about inclusion as well. I laughingly refer to what I do as "full inclusion singing." I talk openly about the many messages that many of us got growing up: messages about keeping quiet, about just moving our mouths during chorus, about not spoiling the sound for the "real singers." And I talk about the ways in which those messages, those lies, silenced us and made us lose our voices. For me, singing, and providing opportunities for everyone to sing, is a powerful way of modeling the process of reclaiming voice, of creating a space in which all voices count, all voices are welcomed, and all voices are acceptable. I am able to use singing as a metaphor as well as singing as a way of building community and inclusion. We need all people to be part of the change process. No one is expendable. Everyone is important.

**“Everyone’s voice is necessary
for us to move the world
forward.”**

The songs that I lead are about inclusion as well. My husband, Mayer Shevin, and I wrote new words to "Home on the Range," entitled "Oh, Give Me a School."

Oh, Give Me a School

(To the tune of "Home on the Range")

Oh, give me a class
Where each student can pass
And we all help each other to learn.
We work and we play
And we stay friends all day
'Cause we know that we'll all have a turn

Home, this feels like home
It's a vision of what school can be.
People caring and fair
Always willing to share

And we're starting right here, you and me

Oh, give me a school
Where to share is the rule
And no teacher must feel all alone.
Where seldom is heard
A comparative word
And where your success adds to my own

Home, this feels like home
It's a vision of what school can be.
People caring and fair
Always willing to share
And we're starting right here, you and me

Oh, give me the earth
Where each person has worth
And all of us know we belong.
We can work as a team
But it starts with a dream
And that's why we're singing this song

Home, this feels like home
It's a vision of what life can be
People caring and fair
Always willing to share
And we're starting right here, you and me

Although the song is "corny," it allows people to sing about, to voice, a vision of classrooms and schools organized differently. I am able to present, through song, a vision that might be difficult for people to hear through words alone. I often share Bob Blue's powerful song "Courage" with groups. No other song that I know makes as poignantly clear the relationship between the exclusion we learn in schools and our subsequent propensity for viewing others as "surplus population," outside our domain of care or responsibility. Because the message comes through a song, people are able to relate to it far better than if I were to stand in front of them and drone, "There are important connections between what we teach in school and the kind of world we create." The song says it far more eloquently.

And I have also used song to help people to develop repertoires of advocacy, ways of responding to critics and cynics. After Pete Seeger's inspirational rendition of "Dear Liza, Dear Willy" at a CMN gathering, I wrote new words to the song, and have had a wonderful time leading large groups of people in singing it:

A New Dear Liza, Dear Willy Song

There's a child in our district, dear Liza, dear Liza,
There's a child in our district, dear Liza, a child

Well, include him, dear Willy, dear Willy, dear Willy
Well, include him, dear Willy, dear Willy, include him

Well, how shall we do it, dear Liza, dear Liza
Well, how shall we do it, dear Liza, then how?

In a classroom, dear Willy, dear Willy, dear Willy

In a classroom, dear Willy, dear Willy, in a classroom

But with what kind of children, dear Liza, dear Liza
But with what kind of children, dear Liza, what kind?

Well, all kinds of children, dear Willy, dear Willy
Well, all kinds of children, dear Willy, all kinds

But what shall we tell them, dear Liza, dear Liza
Well, what shall we tell them, dear Liza, then what?

That children need children, dear Willy, dear Willy
That children need children, dear Willy, children

But what is your hurry, dear Liza, dear Liza,
But what is your hurry, dear Liza, but what?

Cause there's a child in our district, dear Willy, dear Willy
Cause there's a child in our district, dear Willy, a child

When people sing these words, they begin to own them, begin to feel more comfortable saying out loud the kinds of things they may believe but have trouble articulating. Singing is a way of giving voice to our deepest beliefs and passions, of putting not just into words, but into music, messages that need to be shared.

After I participated as an expert witness in a legal case related to the exclusion of a young boy with mental retardation, Mayer and I wrote the following song, which, I am told, has been sung by parent groups throughout the US and Canada:

The Full Inclusion Battle Song

(To the tune of "Union Maid")

Chorus:

Oh, you can't scare us, we're fighting for inclusion
We're winning and you're losin'
It's our future that we're choosin'
Oh, you can't scare us, we're fighting for inclusion
We're fighting for inclusion and we all know why

There once was boy named Mike
An easy kid to like
He went to the school just down the block
Where the kids didn't care how he walked or talked.
But then the district said
"This kid needs Special Ed"
You could hear the sound from miles around
When his mom reared back and said

Chorus

The screening team got mad
At the weird ideas Mom had
"We don't see why these parents mind
This kid belongs with his own kind.
The special school is great
He'll learn to bowl and skate"

But the more they tried to change her mind
The more Mom got irate

Chorus

The head of Special Ed
Pulled out his file and said
"Just look at these IQ statistics
These parents must be realistic.
Our job is to protect
This child from gross neglect"
But the parents held their ground and said
"We mean no disrespect, but..."

Chorus

But back at Michael's school
The kids could not be fooled
They said, "We want our classmate back"
They gave the teachers lots of flak
"We know that Mike is slow
But he shouldn't have to go"
The teachers said "But you're just kids"
The kids all said, "We know, but..."

Chorus

When the hearing it came 'round
The family stood their ground
They brought the folks from SAFE and PEAK
And fourteen kids from down the street.
The judge said, "I can see
And I'm sure you'll all agree
I have no doubt where Mike belongs"
Then he joined in with this song

Chorus

By combining songs that are about inclusion and acceptance with a format that encourages all people to sing, I am able to model what I preach: everyone's voice is necessary for us to move the world forward. We don't leave anyone out. We don't leave people behind. If people are scared or lack skills, we figure out how to teach them and support them. The message is simple: All means all. And, to paraphrase Dolly Parton, "What part of ALL don't you understand?"

Originally published in Issue #16, Fall 1995.



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Reuse, Recycle, Rejoice

by *Ted Warmbrand*

Is it something understood on a deeper level than we know? Children put new words to the tunes around them. Nothing surprising. Mature folk artists always do that. But children can do it with abandon and creative effect. And I assume not too much calculation. If their work circulates, it becomes refined through community engagement.

I have never forgotten the three-year-old singing,

*Row, row, row your boat gently down the dream.
Merrily, merrily, merrily, merrily, life is but a stream.*

The switch of the rhymed nouns made me rethink the song and learn something from the example.

Remember when, in the Pledge of Allegiance, "the Republic for *which* it stands" became "for *rich* it stands?" Or as my mom used to say, "for Richard Stands," whoever he may be. We don't accept everything we're told or sung, right?

I think the creative juices often flow when there's something a bit upsetting in what's being served. Or it feels exaggerated, incomprehensible, or untrue—something that could benefit from a bit of fixing and fussing.

Over forty years ago, while I traveled through Iowa conducting music programs, a little girl shared a song she said she made up. I may have asked the children for any songs they could teach me. I forget. But I can't forget what she, a second grader, sang. It was the words of the McDonald's song, taken from the commercial and sung to the melody of "Down By the Riverside": "McDonald's is your kind of place / a hap hap happy place..."

She proudly sang it HER way: "McDonald's is your kind of place / Hamburgers in your face," and on and on it went. I immediately committed this song to memory and took to the next town in my tour. There, another kid stepped up and proclaimed the classic line folk song collectors know all too well: "That's not the way it goes!" He sang, "McDonald's is your kind of place / They serve you rattlesnakes!" Wouldn't you know it, when I reached Wisconsin, a teacher told me her students were all about that song, and she shared yet other lyrics.

I began compiling a composite of the song to share wherever I traveled, editing out the duplicate lines and making it two verses long. Soon I had collected a Burger King and then a Jack in the Box parody, completing what I



Ted with his grandchildren. (photo by Grady Bautista)

call now my "Hamburger Trilogy."

McDonald's is your kind of place
Hamburgers in your face
French fries 'tween your toes
Pickles up your nose
Ketchup running down my back
I want my money back!
Before I have a heart attack

McDonald's is your kind of place
They serve you rattlesnakes
They take your parking place
And steal your license plate
They serve you drippy shakes
That come from polluted lakes
McDonald's is your kind of place

Burn the pickle, burn the lettuce
Shut up, lady, don't upset us
All we ask is that you let us
Have it OUR way
Have it our way, have it our way
At "Bugger" King

Walk in the door there's a roach on the floor
At Jack in the Box
Look in your shake there's a green slimy snake
At Jack in the Box
Walk to the stand and make your demand
At Jack in the Box
Eat up the fries and lick off the flies
At Jack in the Box

These creations are part of a great tradition. Pete Seeger recorded a kids' Pepsi-Cola parody that was floating around at the time on his album *Folk Songs for Young People* (<http://www.folkways.si.edu/pete-seeger/folk-songs-for-young-people/american-folk-childrens/music/album/smithsonian>) ("Pepsi Cola la hits the spot / Ties your belly in a knot!"). The tune used for the commercial was "Do Ya Ken John Peel" (<http://historybecauseitshere.weebly.com/do-you-ken-john-peel.html>). Didn't Michael Cooney record one about the chocolate syrup *Bosco* (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F-aCP3SVu-Q>) ("I hate Bosco! / It's bad for you and me. / Mama puts some in my milk to try and poison me") as well as a *Comet cleanser parody* ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Comet_\(song\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Comet_(song))) ("Comet! Will make your teeth turn green! / Comet! It tastes like gasoline") set to the "Colonel Bogey March"?

Parodies are power. They reclaim narratives. Besides commercials with their jingles, there are the ubiquitous holiday songs that commonly get the treatment. Authority figures get their comeuppance in often dramatic ways. Pete didn't hold back when he recorded these words to "Frère Jacques":

Mayrowana, mayrowana
LSD, LSD
College kids are making it
High school kids are taking it

Why can't we?

He called that album *Young vs Old* (<http://www.allmusic.com/album/pete-seeger-young-vs-old-mw0000889744>). You can bet some versions had teachers referenced too.

One of my favorite finds was in a Boston preschool. The children were singing the freedom song "Ain't Gonna Let Nobody Turn Me Around." Joan Baez had recorded its last line as "Gonna build a brand new world." I'd always known it as "Marchin' up to freedom land." How many other ways this zipper had been sung, I can only guess. The kids I was with that day sang, less dramatically, "Marching to the freedom BAND." It reinforced for me a provocative adage a Vietnam vet shared with me from his term overseas: "We don't struggle to be free. We struggle because we ARE free."

I bet as we listen to children we find they have lots of songs they sing to themselves and each other that they may not know we'd like to hear. My grandson, Izeah, was two years old when he heard me singing the refrain to "Sourwood Mountain" with "a diddle um day." It wasn't enough for him. It became "I diddle all day" and morphed into "I did a long day." Not too shabby.

Keep those lines of communication open.



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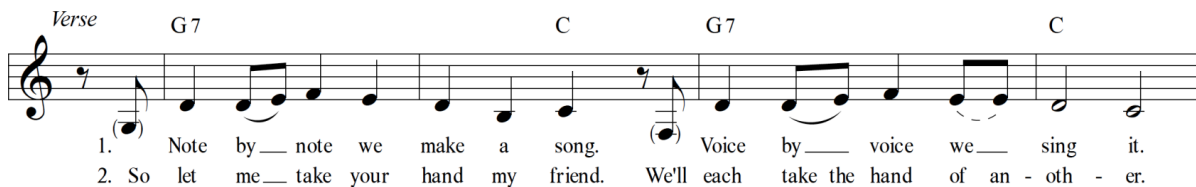
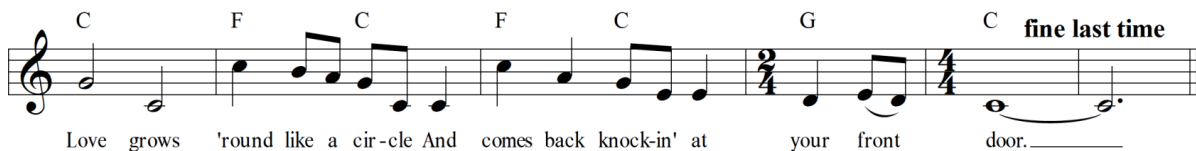
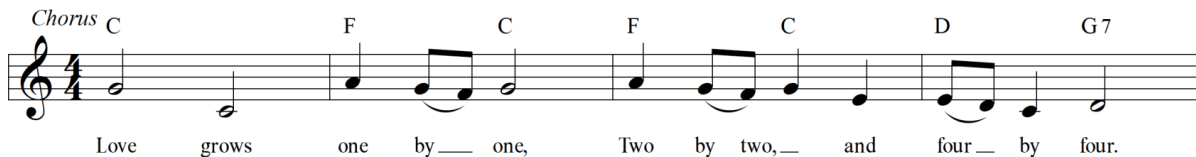
Love Grows One by One

Words and music by Carol Johnson
©1981 Noeldner Music, BMI



I grew up performing with four sisters throughout my native Wisconsin. Later, I wrote songs profusely, as a '60's troubadour, a club entertainer, and as a voice for peace and justice. I found great joy in writing songs for my own two growing children, songs that were not only fun to sing, but that also taught important concepts: Be kind to one another, to the earth, and to all living things.

"Love Grows One by One" was written as a wedding gift for two extraordinary teachers at a small alternative school where my two children were enrolled. I "got" this song literally on the way to the wedding, having failed to find a gift I felt worthy of the couple. During the space between the wedding and the reception, I rounded up the children from the school, quietly shuffled them off to another room, taught them the song, came back to form a circle around Dave and Hildi, and surprised them with it.



Choir by choir we fill up the world With the mu - sic that we bring it.
 One by one we'll reach for all Our sis - ters and our bro - thers.

Chorus

Love grows one by one,
 Two by two, and four by four.
 Love grows 'round like a circle
 And comes back knockin' at your front door.

Note by note we make a song.
 Voice by voice we sing it.
 Choir by choir we fill up the world
 With the music that we bring it.

Chorus

So let me take your hand my friend.
 We'll each take the hand of another.
 One by one we'll reach for all
 Our sisters and our brothers.

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Turning of the World

Words and music by Ruth Pelham
©1982 Ruth Pelham Music



Ruth wrote "Turning of the World" at the height of the anti-nuke movement as a musical way for people to affirm the positive power of us working together for peace and justice in our local and global communities. Singers can easily make up their own words by simply changing the word "turning" to "loving" or "healing" or whatever other concepts ring most relevant.

When Ruth introduces this song to children or adults, she says: "I wrote this song one morning right after I woke up from a dream. This song is about unity, and people working together to build a safe and peaceful world. The dream of peace is not just a dream of mine. It is shared by millions of people of every age, culture, religion, and background, and is the glue that holds us together as one humanity."

"A great thing about being alive in these times is that millions of people all over the world are doing things to bring about peace. In every country, people are working alone or in groups to make our world better, and to assure that each of us has our basic needs met for food, clothing, shelter, and safety. Every day brings us closer to realizing this dream, and each one of us can help to make that happen. When we work together in large numbers, the results can be awesome."

Verse

G D Em Bm C

Let us sing this song for the turn - ing of the world, ____ That we may

G D G D

turn as ____ one. With e - v'ry voice, with e - v'ry song, ____ We will

Em Bm C G D G

move this world a - long. ____ And our lives will feel the e - cho of our turn - ing.

Chorus

With e - v'ry voice, with e - v'ry song, Oh, we will move this world a - long. With e - v'ry voice, with e - v'ry song, We will move this world a-long. And our lives will feel the e - cho of our turn - ing.

Let us sing this song for the turning of the world,
That we may turn as one.
With every voice, with every song,
We will move this world along.
And our lives will feel the echo of our turning.

Chorus:

With every voice, with every song,
Oh, we will move this world along.
With every voice, with every song,
We will move this world along.
And our lives will feel the echo of our turning.

Let us sing this song for the healing of the world,
That we may heal as one.
With every voice, with every song,
We will move this world along.
And our lives will feel the echo of our healing.

Chorus (echo of our healing)

Let us sing this song for the dreaming of the world,
That we may dream as one.
With every voice, with every song,
We will move this world along.
And our lives will feel the echo of our dreaming.

Chorus (echo of our dreaming)

Let us sing this song for the loving of the world,
That we may love as one.
With every voice, with every song,
We will move this world along.
And our lives will feel the echo of our loving.

Chorus (echo of our loving)

Coda:

And our lives will feel the echo of our dreaming.

And our lives will feel the echo of our healing.
And our lives will feel the echo of our turning.

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A Small Star

Words and music by Joyce Johnson Rouse
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Joyce J. Rouse considers music her original language and started making up little songs before she could speak. "My mother sang as she cooked and cleaned and gardened and hiked in the woods, all the songs of her youth. So I learned words to them all early on. Later church music, 4-H, camp and wonderful public school music teachers nurtured more genres, including Woody Guthrie, Pete Seeger, Malvina Reynolds, and more.

"When I wrote 'A Small Star,' I had in mind someone I was mentoring and encouraging through a rough patch of life. I could not say the words, but they spoke out of the tips of my fingers as a song on the piano. The image was inspired by words from a sermon in church a few days earlier. The minister said there was an old Finnish proverb that claimed 'even a small star shines in the darkness,' reminding us of perspective and relativity. It was a few years later, as I was singing the song in the studio, that I realized I had been writing those words for a part of myself that felt ineffective, small, and not very sparkly at that point in my life. Truly, when we don't feel very shiny, we can still shine for others in ways we cannot know. So, shine on!"

1. You don't have to feel brave to be brave, _____ And I don't have to
2. May - be there are times you feel lone - ly, _____ Like no - one sees the

feel strong to be strong. _____ We don't have to feel in - spi-r-ing to in _____
world the way you do. _____ E - v'ry one of us is made _____ u

spi - re. _____ Re - mem - ber when your road is rough and long. _____
nique - ly, _____ And no - one ev - er sees their own mag - ni - tude. _____ But, E - ven a

Chorus

C G/A (C/A) F C G/A (C/A)

small star shines in the dark - ness, — For some - one, some - where to

F G7 G 3 F G7 Am F9

see. — It lights the way for those in the dis - tance. — That's what your

F/D G7 C F7 G7 **fine** *Bridge* Em F9

cou - rage means to me. — So don't be a - fraid to be a lit - tle

C Em F C

bril - liant; — Don't be a - fraid to shine in some - one's eyes. — If we can

Em F9 Em Am

trust the gifts that some - times make us dif - f'rent, —

D7 3 3 C/E Gsus G7 **D.S. al fine**

Then we can all learn to shine, shine, shine! —

You don't have to feel brave to be brave,
 And I don't have to feel strong to be strong.
 We don't have to feel inspiring to inspire.
 Remember when your road is rough and long,

Chorus:

Even a small star shines in the darkness,
 For someone, somewhere to see.
 It lights the way for those in the distance.
 That's what your courage means to me.

Maybe there are times you feel lonely,
 Like no one sees the world the way you do.
 Everyone of us is made uniquely,
 And no one ever sees their own magnitude.

Chorus

Bridge:

So don't be afraid to be a little brilliant;
 Don't be afraid to shine in someone's eyes.

If we can trust the gifts that sometimes make us different,
Then we can all learn to shine, shine, shine!

Chorus

Tag:

That's what your courage means to me.

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Songs | Spring 2016

I Lift My Lamp

Words by Emma Lazarus, adapted by Ted Warmbrand
Music by Ted Warmbrand
©2013 Ted Warmbrand

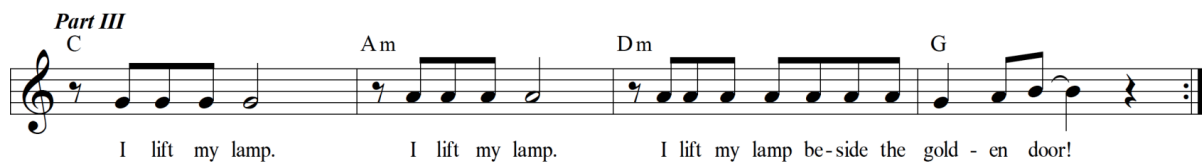
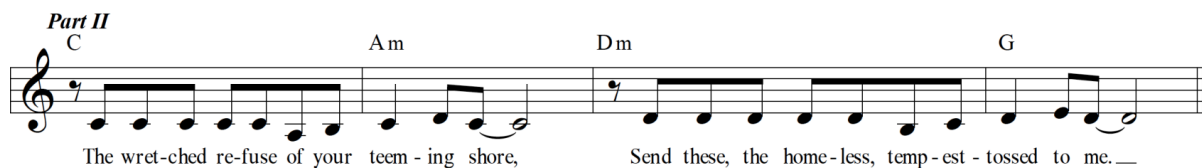
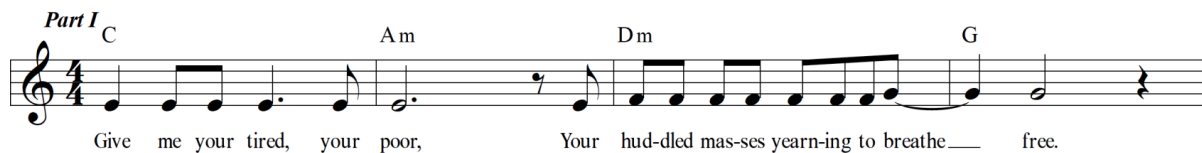


Ted writes: "Come wintertime and the promise of a new year and new possibilities, I tend to gather songs of light and convene people in the community to sing them. Several years back, on the way to one of these exciting sessions, it occurred to me that the famous words on the Statue of Liberty were strong enough to support a new singable setting, not that anyone wants to put down Irving Berlin.

"As the room filled with sound, joyously and powerfully on first try, it was hard to end the song. I went home and tried to complicate it a bit in several ways. You can too, or simplify it by leaving out the 'huddled masses' line. Artistic license?"

"The words are from 'The New Colossus,' a poem by Emma Lazarus. This nineteenth-century Sephardic Jewish poet had deep American roots stretching back before the revolution. She never lived to see her words, engraved on the statue's base, become so well known, loved, and iconic.

"This song reminds me that I have a light to shine, a lamp to lift. It speaks for itself. I see some folks heading our way..."



Give me your tired, your poor,

Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free.
The wretched refuse of your teeming shore,
Send these, the homeless, tempest-tossed to me.
I lift my lamp. I lift my lamp.
I lift my lamp beside the golden door!

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The Children's Music Network



My House Is a Construction Zone

Words and music by *Lydia Adams Davis*
©1989 Lydia Adams Davis



Lydia Davis is a singer/songwriter and puppeteer who performs for all ages. Her songs are often inspired by nature. "In the late '80s I appeared annually at the Canadian Thousand Island State Park at the request of the naturalist rangers who maintained a vast collection of Indian artifacts and out-of-print books that I frequently studied by candlelight in my electricity-free cabin. As a songwriter-storyteller and amateur naturalist, my imagination was captivated by the tale of a determined beaver, nicknamed "The Engineer," who challenged a commercial logging operation by rebuilding his dam every night after the logging engineers removed it the previous day. "The Engineer" ultimately won the battle as the commercial venture moved elsewhere! Thus, his dam built a Bridge to Environmental Peace...at least for a time.

"Around this time, I was the elementary music teacher at a Bronx country day school, and one of my students was enduring life in an apartment undergoing extensive renovation. One day she declared, 'My house is a construction zone!' in extreme pique. All it takes is a hook to birth a song. I adapted her situation to the beaver tale, and later, as a professional entertainer and puppeteer, 'Beaver' completed the verses in performance!"

With a Bo Diddly beat ♩ = 80

Chorus

My house is a con - struc - tion zone, No place here to call my own!

My house is a con - struc - tion zone, No place here to call my own.

Verse

Well, I chop down the tree with my teeth, File off the branch - es eas -

G C F G C F G C

- y to reach, Push all the piec - es in - to the stream,

F G C F F C *D.C. al fine*

Float 'em in a line, if you know what I mean!

Chorus:

My house is a construction zone,
 No place here to call my own!
 My house is a construction zone,
 No place here to call my own!

Well, I chop down the tree with my teeth,
 File off the branches easy to reach,
 Push all the pieces into the stream,
 Float 'em in a line, if you know what I mean!

Chorus

Then I scoop up the mud from the bottom of the stream,
 Pack it down tight, so the water stays clean.
 This makes a place where I can swim,
 'Cause the dam is holding the water in.

Chorus

With the leftover branches, I shape my dome.
 A two-story lodge is my new home!
 My family sleeps right here with me,
 In our habitat we made from the tree!

Chorus

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Songs | Spring 2016

So Many Stars

Words and music by Dorothy Cresswell
©1995 Dorothy Cresswell



Dorothy says, "'So Many Stars' was written about midway through my teaching career. I had taken my class of kindergartners to see the Fourth Grade Invention Fair. They were very impressed (and so was I) with the variety and cleverness of the inventions. Yet every day I witnessed the kindergartners coming up with new ways of constructing with large and small blocks, using craft materials, and playing together indoors and out. I saw endless possibilities in them, too. Endless, like the stars. I wanted them to know that the inventors of the everyday wonders that we take for granted now (like lights, phones, and cars) were once little kids, exploring with string and wheels and sound! Just like any day in any school or home or backyard or basement. So have fun singing this, and feel free to add more verses!"

Chorus

A D E A

So ma - ny stars you can't count them all. Each lit - tle star is a great fi - re - ball.

D E

From far a - way our dreams may look small. Move toward them be - liev - ing they

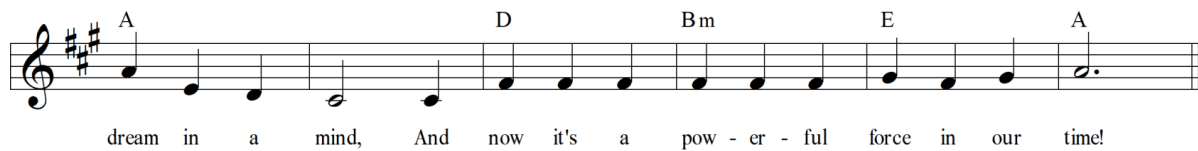
Verse

A D A

grow pow - er - ful! What do you be - lieve when you switch on a light? Will the

E A D

room re - main dark or be sud - den - ly bright? Well the light switch was once just a



Chorus:

So many stars you can't count them all.
Each little star is a great fireball.
From far away our dreams may look small.
Move toward them believing they grow powerful!

What do you believe when you switch on a light?
Will the room remain dark or be suddenly bright?
Well the light switch was once just a dream in a mind,
And now it's a powerful force in our time.

Chorus

What do you believe when you talk on the phone?
Does someone else hear you or are you alone?
Well the cell phone was once just a dream in a mind,
And now it's a powerful force in our time!

Chorus

What do you believe when you start up your car?
Will you drive off or just sit where you are?
Well the car was once just a dream in a mind,
And now it's a powerful force in our time!

Chorus

These questions seem silly; I know that they do.
But remember these things came from dreamers like you.
So follow your hopes as wild as they seem,
And one day the world may believe in your dream!

Chorus

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Spin Me a Web of Stories

Words by Linda Boyle and Eavon Ngo-Solis

Music by Linda Boyle

©2005 Linda Boyle



Linda Boyle and Eavon Ngo-Solis were teachers at Sullivan High School in Chicago. This song was created from a writing prompt given to English language learners by Eavon, their teacher. Eavon understood the importance of her students sharing their stories, having fled Vietnam at the age of three with her parents. Linda recorded student responses to this and another prompt, and created a chorus to link their narratives. The juniors and seniors were from many African nations, the Middle East, the Caribbean, the Americas, and Europe. They bravely shared their struggles as emigrants and refugees escaping war, hunger, and poverty, and the hope for a safer, more just way of life in the United States. Many of their narratives are on the *Brave Songs* CD by Linda, with further information on the accompanying [slideshow](#). Margaret Muthiga, a teacher at Kilimo Primary School in Egerton, Kenya, heard the narratives and chorus at a workshop, and wanted to share them with her students. She graciously translated the song into Kiswahili.

bo. Wim-bo Your song, _____ my song, _____ Your song, _____
bo. Wim-bo wa - ko, _____ wim-bo wan - gu, _____ Wim-bo wa - ko _____ wim-bo

our song. _____ Spin me a web,
we - tu. _____

Repeat and fade at will

Part 1: spin me a web, Spin me a web, spin me a web, Oh Spin me a web.

Part 2: Spin me a web, spin me a web.

Song:

Spin me a web of stories, sing me your song.
Make me laugh and cry, show me nothing can go wrong.
Spin me a web of stories, spin me a web of stories,
Sing me your song.
Your song, my song,
Your song, our song

Song in Kiswahili:

Unifumie utandu wa hadithi, nimbie wimbo wako
Make me laugh and cry, show me nothing can go wrong.
Unifumie utandu wa hadithi, unifumie utandu wa hadithi,
Nimbie wimbo
Wimbo wako, wimbo wangu,
Wimbo wako, wimbo wetu

Coda:

Part 1

Spin me a web, spin me a web,
Spin me a web, spin me a web, oh. (*Repeat and fade at will*)

Part 2

Spin me a web, spin me a web.

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Tulippu / The Tulip Song

Traditional children's song from Japan



Laura Jo Ackerman writes: "The 'Tulip Song,' also known as 'Churippu,' has been such a treasure in my song collection. The song was brought to me by the parents of one of my English classes that I was blessed with while living for three years in the southern city of Sasebo in Nagasaki. Each Sunday morning twenty little girls would pour into my home to learn English from me. I taught most of the English language through song, and in turn, the parents asked to learn a Japanese song in English. The 'Tulip Song' was the first Japanese song for me to learn, so it was a wonderful exchange. The parents worked hard to create a proper English translation. We were so happy in the end to have collaborated in such a way. True friendships came about through this venture, and they prosper to this day!"

G D G

Sa - i - ta, Sa - i - ta, Tu - lip - pu no ha - na ga. Na - ran - da, na - ran - da,
Bloom, bloom, Tu lip flo - wer. In a row, In a row,

D G C G D G

A - ka, shi - ro, ki - i - ro. Do - no ha - na mi - te mo. Ki - re - i da na.
Red and white and yel - low. They are all so beau - ti ful. I think so.

さいた さいた チューリップのはなが
ならんだ ならんだ
あか しろ きいろ
どのはなみても きれいだな

Saita, saita
Tulippu no hana ga.
Naranda, naranda,
Aka, shiro, kiiro.
Dono hana mite mo.
Kirei da na.

Translation:

Bloom, bloom,
Tulip flower.
In a row, in a row,
Red and white and yellow.
They are all so beautiful.
I think so.

Alternative verse (PIO! editors):

Blooming, blossoming,
Tulip flowers everywhere.
In a row, in a row,
Red, white and yellow.
Every flower that you see
Is so beautiful.

"I teach the 'Tulip Song' by just jumping right into it, as it has such a pleasant tune. Even if the words are a mystery, they are a sweet sound to the ears. If I am in a 'Story Time' situation, I use a felt board. As the colors of the tulips are sung, I place them on the board and point to them. The children and families are very excited when they recognize some of the words. Then the song is translated into English and the mystery is finally solved! I also extend learning with scarves by pulling the colors out of the pile as the song is sung.

"Using a parachute with a group is especially fun. When singing with a child-parent class, ask children to be the 'tulips' and stay seated in a small circle while parents walk with the parachute. For classroom use, break the class into two parts: one group is tulips, the other group uses the parachute. Directions: On 'Saita,' circle to the right, holding the edge of the parachute over the tulips. Reverse directions on 'Naranda.' On 'Dono...' walk forward, making the parachute 'mushroom' high above the children. Bring the parachute down quickly on the last line, 'Kirei da na,' and quickly lift, as being hidden from parents can be very scary. This final line is interpreted as 'We think so!' a nice verification to the children that we have missed them and are so happy to see them all again. All of us agree that the children 'are all so beautiful.'"

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The Children's Music Network



Let's Talk Tech

Stepping Into Mama Lisa's World

An Interview With Lisa Yannucci

by Alina Celeste

If you teach music to children and have access to the Internet, you have probably come across [Mama Lisa's World](http://www.mamalisa.com) (<http://www.mamalisa.com>). Overseen by the eponymous founder, Lisa Yannucci, with the help of her husband, Jason Pomerantz, and her friend and fellow folk song lover, Monique Palomares, the site receives contributions from teachers, librarians, grandparents, parents, and folk song enthusiasts from all over the world, and is home to over 4,000 traditional children's rhymes and songs in over 220 languages. It has become an invaluable and ever-growing resource for traditional and folk music. Lisa and I had a lovely chat one sunny afternoon about her love of music, the importance of sharing musical traditions, and the willingness of people all over the world to help preserve those traditions.



(photo by Jason Pomerantz)

Alina: So how and when did you start Mama Lisa's World?

Lisa: Well, actually I started it for my son. I'm pretty sure it was in 1997. When he turned three years old, I took photos of the family, and when they came over for his birthday party, I had them all record a message to him. He always loved working with computers, even when he was three. On the computer, I connected each recording to the photo so he could click on the picture and hear their message to him. A couple of people did nursery rhymes. So I thought, "I could make a site of this with nursery rhymes." So I just started with the most popular nursery rhymes. And that was really the start of it. Then, within six months to a year, I thought, "I studied overseas for a semester in France and I've always been interested in international cultures. So why don't I make it international?" and I started writing to consulates and embassies asking for songs.

Really? Did they write back?

They did! A lot of them did.

Wow!

Yeah, I know. So I started getting some songs that way. Of course I knew some, like "Frère Jacques" and songs like that. And then slowly, over time, it

grew. Also I always had a note on the website asking for people to share their songs and rhymes, because not everybody here has the same version. To me that's important. I want the version you grew up with also. It's a living culture; it's not something that's just in a book.

Yes, it's part of the folk tradition.

Right. So you know, over time, I started getting more and more rhymes and countries. And eventually Monique, who I work with now, contacted me. She translated a couple of songs into French and Spanish. She speaks French, Spanish, Italian, and Occitan.

Isn't that like ancient French?

It's a Romance language, the language of the Troubadours. It's still spoken in Spain, little bit of Spain, little bit of Italy. I think mostly southern France. So she started sending me Occitan rhymes and songs, and eventually she just kept sending me so much. So I asked her if she would like to start a French version of the site. And she was enthusiastic, so I work with her now too! A few years after we created the French version of the site, I asked if she would like to create a Spanish version, and she said yes!

So the two of you work remotely?

Yes. She also comes here [New York City] about every year or every other year and we work together and go touring around New York.

You allow advertising on the site. There has been a debate now for a few years about whether to monetize the CMN website. A lot of people are against it, because that's not what we're about and it's about sharing and folk music. But some others feel that ads are everywhere, so it wouldn't make a big difference and could help us.

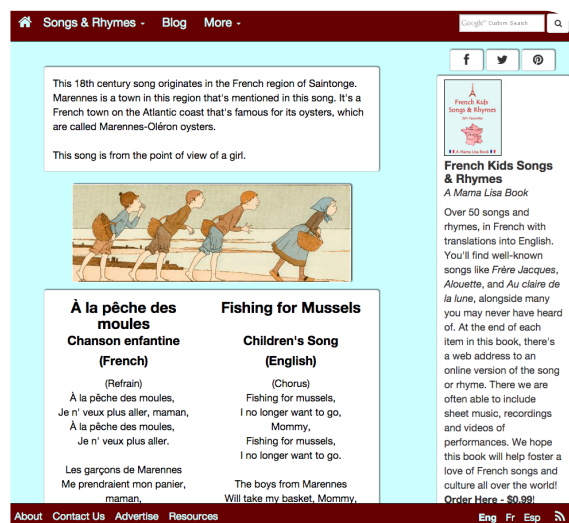
Right. I fought it for a long time, but there are expenses in just running a site. We have a lot of traffic so we have to pay a lot more money. Originally we'd have to pay twenty-five dollars a month, but as we get more traffic, it goes up and up.

Of course. So speaking of your site, every couple of years you seem to go through a visual overhaul.

Yes! Well, I'm lucky my husband can do some programming. Basically I started it just doing some HTML coding. But you know, now we have over 220 languages, and a lot of languages have different characters. It's really complicated! Over four thousand songs. Jason constantly works on it in his spare time. It's such a big thing to do, and he works full time elsewhere, so it can take a while for changes.

Did you notice we just changed? We upgraded the look.

Yes! I had noticed. I think it looks great, by the way. When I first started teaching music I did not have a degree in education, so I was really sort of at a loss for songs. I've used your site for years, and I've



seen the change and the growth. Every change you make is an improvement.

Thank you. Our biggest improvement lately is that you can use it on mobile, where it will fit the screen size. That was a big change. We are also adding a feature this week, which is song type. I'm still working on it.

Yes, I've noticed. I'm actually on your site right now and I just thought, "Wow. Songs for washing up!"

Yes. We'll be adding more, but we notice that a lot of people, for some reason, are interested in songs for hand washing and keeping clean and neat.

Well, classroom rituals are a big deal.

We have goodbye songs and then we have farewell songs. Farewell songs are more from other cultures where it's actually singing a song of farewell.

So you're really beginning to parse this down. You get really specific.

You know, we always had song types in, but we never had a way to sort it. That's a difference. Now you can actually access it.

So you started the site, like you said, for your son, but was there anything else that led you to this?

Believe it or not, my degree is actually called Language and Culture.

Oh! So this is a direct progression. Where is your degree from?

SUNY Purchase.

And what other languages do you speak? Any languages other than English?

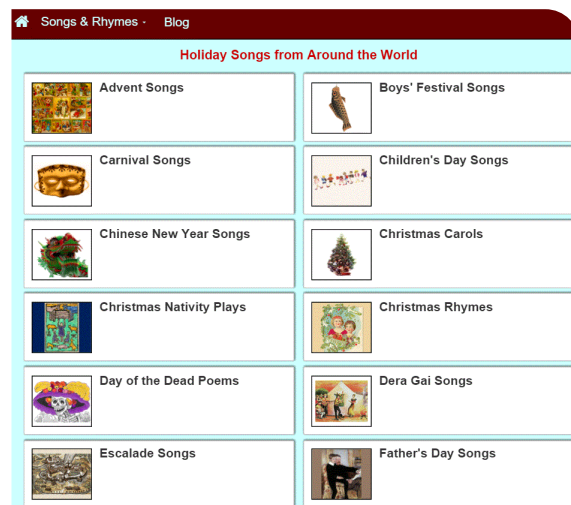
You know, I speak some French but it's very rusty. I can understand some Spanish. It's very hard when you're not there, though.

So you also have recipes and such on here. Is that new? I hadn't noticed that before.

Right. No, I've had that. That's all from the blog. I write about traditions around the world and include recipes and poetry. The whole thing is really aimed at kids, and I try to keep it kid friendly. But it's not all for kids. For example, there are wedding songs and things like that that are not really for kids. Some of it is really folk tradition.

I know this is your full-time job at this point, but when you say full time, are you spending forty hours a week on this? Eighty? Twenty?

Probably about forty hours. I take off most of the summer to spend time with my kids.



(photo by Jason Pomerantz)

And when did you monetize? How long ago?

At least ten years ago I would say. It was very difficult to do.

What are the biggest challenges for you as the site grows?

The programming, because my husband has a full time job. That really is hard. It'll take him at least a year to do every design.

Wow.

Jason is really dedicated, and it's wonderful because it's hard for him. You know what I mean? He believes in it, too, and likes working on the site. He finds it relaxing. Also, recently, I don't know why but I decided I should try to get a song from every country in the world. That was really difficult. I already had a lot but I was missing probably seventy-five countries. So I went back to writing to consulates. This time I did not really get that much help! But we did it. We got every country.

Congratulations!

Thank you. A few of the countries just have proverbs, but at least it's something. So that's a start, because otherwise people from the country wouldn't even find the site—and we want them to find it. Hopefully they'll say, "Oh, I'll contribute a song because they don't have one."

I was going to ask you what some of your big successes have been. I would say a song from every country is one of them!

That is one of them.

What about an unexpected success? Something you never could have imagined in the beginning.

Honestly, the whole thing! It's amazing how much people have helped me. Even with getting these other countries. Some of these countries are little, or not really on the Internet. So I started going to Twitter, everything I could think of, and people really tried to help. It just amazes me how much people have helped. I should also mention that my daughter, her friends, and my niece and nephew have also helped with the site. They've taught me schoolyard songs I've added, helped with recording songs and rhymes, and done illustrations.

Where do you see the site going as you continue to work on it?

That's such a good question. I don't know if you know we have some books and apps.

Yes.

We hope to put more of that sort of thing out, because I think people want to be able to share it. Sometimes people are interested in, say, the Italy book, because they or their parents were American immigrants or children of immigrants, and it is a piece of their history. It's something their family left behind, and can be shared—because they grew up with the songs. So we'd like to do more of that: collect and preserve songs people grew up with. Also, physically, we want to get more recordings and keep growing that aspect of the site.

We also have another feature coming soon. We call it, "Song Families." These are songs on the site that are sung all over the world but have different versions, like "Frère Jacques." We have probably over fifty versions of "Frère Jacques" on the site. But they're only connected internally because we've been connecting them. Hopefully you will be able to see all those connections and all those versions in the very near future.

Thank you so much for taking the time to share an inside look at Mama Lisa's World.

My pleasure!



The Children's Music Network

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Music In Bloom

Building Bridges Through Music from School to Home

by Maureen Conlin

Early childhood music educators are provided with so many wonderful opportunities to guide young children on their musical journey and are given many occasions to connect the environments of school and home through music.

Melodies and lyrics that young children learn at preschool and daycare are carried home and sung by the children, enhancing their musical adventure in the home. Whether songs are about eating healthy, cleaning up, covering a nose when sneezing, or brushing teeth, children sing as they learn.

Parents can reinforce this learning in their own home environments when they are given the tools that music educators use. A great way to begin building the bridge from school to home is to provide parents and/or caregivers with a sheet of lyrics using familiar melodies to sing with their child. In addition, post a monthly newsletter, or a "happy note," for parents to let them know the ways their children are learning and using music.

Provide parents with information about games and songs that encourage young children to be creative and imaginative, and encourage them to partner in constructing pathways that provide a flow of music and musical activities from school to home. Model different strategies for engaging children in creative play, e.g., invite parents to ask their child to pick a topic they would like to sing about. If their child suggests writing a song about a dancing dinosaur, one option would be to ask questions: "What does the dinosaur look like? What sound does he make when he is dancing? What dance does he like to do?" The first verse might be "Dancing dinosaurs stomp around, twisting, turning with feet on the ground!" It is then up to the imagination and creativity of the child and their family to complete the song, then share the new song with his or her classmates!

Parents and caregivers may also not be aware of the many resources that are available to them at the public library to enhance their child's musical journey. Communicating these resources to



(photo by Maureen Conlin)



(photo by Maureen Conlin)

parents and caregivers is extremely helpful.

Online resources include curated YouTube videos and selected websites highlighting musicians who focus on early childhood music. Libraries also offer invaluable resources, contain robust and engaging collections of CDs and DVDs to borrow, and often host performers and author visits. There are also loads of wonderful children's books we use in class that can be shared with parents and caregivers, and most are available at public libraries. Some examples are *The Maestro Plays* (http://www.goodreads.com/book/show/200257.The_Maestro_Plays) by Bill Martin Jr. and Vladimir Radunsky; *Orchestranimals* (<http://www.goodreads.com/book/show/2134741.Orchestranimals>) by Vlasta van Kampen and Irene C. Eugen; *What Instrument Is This?* (<http://www.goodreads.com/book/show/4510585-what-instrument-is-this>) by Rosmarie Hausherr; *Zin! Zin! Zin! A Violin* (http://www.goodreads.com/book/show/884481.Zin_Zin_Zin_A_Violin) by Lloyd Moss; or *The Happy Hedgehog Band* (http://www.goodreads.com/book/show/2148526.The_Happy_Hedgehog_Band) by Jill Barton. In addition, most children's collections have a section dedicated to popular songs that have been made into picture books, e.g. "Miss Mary Mack," "My Favorite Things," "Fiddle-I-Fee," and many more.

Consider providing parents with a lending library of resources that families can take home to explore together. This might include CDs, picture books, and songbooks.

The Children's Music Network is an excellent resource for parents and caregivers with its many accomplished composers, lyricists, songwriters, and early childhood music educators. There is a listserv where members can post a request for a specific type of song (e.g. "Does anyone have a song about rain?") and receive many suggestions. And don't forget the booklists on the [Member Pages](#), which include [annotated recommendations](#) (<http://www.cmnonline.org/members/doc/MusicLiteracyBooklist.pdf>) and even [drum and instrument use](#) (<http://www.cmnonline.org/members/doc/MusicalBooks.pdf>). Non-members can find treasures in the CMN Song Library's newly revised [Peace Songs for Children](#) and [Environmental Songs for Children](#). Communicate this information to parents so they may increase their resources and renew their interest in their child's musical education.

Encourage parents to have their child bring in backpack-sized instruments from home to share during a musical show and share time. And encourage children to bring home their songs, stories, and activities to share with their families!

Coordinate a "Tune Out and Turn Off Television Week" where there is no television or screen time in the evenings, and offer suggestions for a musical activity for every night during that week. This could include musical games like "Name That Tune," instrument or song bingo, musical charades, a musical puppet show, or a play and perform evening.

Urge parents to integrate singing into their children's daily lives: songs for travel from home to school, songs to clean up toys, songs to transition from one activity to the next. We use so many of these in the school or childcare environment but often don't think to share these songs with parents. Many parents have trouble getting their children to eat healthy foods or even to sit at the table while eating their meals. How grateful a parent would be to have a song encouraging their children to eat "broccoli trees" or "monkey bites" (slices of banana).

Ask parents to explore “found sounds” with children in their home environment. Make a kitchen band composed of pots and pans and wooden spoons, or create sock puppets to animate with silly voices and silly songs. Cut a snowflake from a coffee filter or piece of paper, then dance and float around the kitchen to music.

Creating simple and easy-to-use homemade instruments is another way that parents can become involved in their young child’s musical education. As early childhood educators, we can provide instructions or Internet links so families can work on the project together. The new instrument can then be added to a bandbox of musical instruments all created by the classroom families. Online resources are easily found for rain sticks, maracas and shakers, decorated dowel sticks, jingle bells or jingle shells, tambourines, and drums. The possibilities are endless.

Please invite parents to participate in music time with their children at their school or center. Plan an “informance” where children share the activities they are learning that include singing songs, performing simple dances, and playing rhythm instruments together. It is a wonderful way for parents and family members to see how their child is learning at school.

Building musical bridges from school to home offers many creative and happy opportunities for meaningful connection. Communication is the hammer; creative activities are the nails; songs and musical instruments are the wood, bricks, and mortar; and we, as early childhood music educators, are the architects and builders. Wishing you great success in your construction endeavors!



(photo by Maureen Conlin)



The Children's Music Network



Music With Older Kids

Hearts and Voices of the Pihcintu Chorus

An Interview with Con Fullam

by Sally Rogers

I happened upon the *Pihcintu Multicultural Chorus* (<http://pihcintu.org>) in Portland, Maine while researching community choruses across the country. It was founded ten years ago by songwriter *Con Fullam* (<http://www.confullam.com>) to provide newly arrived immigrant and refugee children with a place to sing about peace and justice and to socialize with young people of similar backgrounds from around the world. The chorus has as many as thirty singers from seventeen countries and has sung at the Kennedy Center and the United Nations. I was deeply touched by *Fly Little Birds Fly* (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=miN2eOxP7co>), which addresses the "tragic loss of lives taken by senseless school shootings across America" and thought the Children's Music Network community would be interested in a closer look at *Fullam's work* (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AOavfkxRiWs>) with these inspiring young singers.



Sally Rogers: I ran across your Pihcintu Chorus when I was writing an article about community choruses for the *Orff Echo*. My jaw dropped when I listened to the videos of the girls singing. Then I read about their life stories and was humbled by their strength and courage. I am in awe of what you are doing up there in Maine! What was the great "a-ha moment" that made you start the Pihcintu chorus?

Con Fullam: It began ten years ago on a very cold, wet Saturday in November when we held our very first auditions at Reiche Elementary School in Portland, Maine.

So it is an auditioned chorus?

Yes, it is; however, I turn very few away due to voice quality. It's really about who they are, what their commitment is to the group, and what they feel they can bring to the chorus other than their vocal talents. I'm not looking for the next Beyoncé. I'm far more interested in who these kids are at their heart.



Con Fullam

And what they want to say.

Sure. Portland has a huge refugee resettlement program that goes back many, many years. You see them on the street all the time, without necessarily making the connection.

I read that Portland has over 2,000 refugees from Sudan alone, plus many from other places in the world.

Yes, and you can tell where the latest conflagration is in the world by who the new arrivals are. For instance, at this particular moment in time I'm getting a lot of kids from Burundi, some from Afghanistan, and a number of Iraqis. But due to what's happening now, I fear that refugees from those areas will be cut off.

Have you gotten any Syrian refugees?

No. The truth of the matter is that it takes over two years to get cleared to enter the United States.

The United States is not an easy entry by any stretch of the imagination, unlike what you might hear from the pundits.

No, not at all. It's as far from the truth as you can get. Refugees are battered left and right for at least two years. As I've said often, the very first thing you lose when you come to a foreign country is your voice. Quite literally.

If you can't speak English, you're stuck.

Exactly. Having worked with Catholic Charities, it became wildly apparent to me what a rich cultural gift these people were to the whitest state in the Union. I found that the chorus was a fascinating way for kids to learn English phonetically. A couple of years ago I had a young woman from Darfur who was recommended to me by one of the English as a Second Language (ESL) programs here. She had just arrived and spoke nothing but Arabic, but loved to sing. Within three weeks, she called me up one night and sang all the songs to me over the phone, which was a very touching moment. Even though she wasn't entirely aware of what she was singing, she sounded lovely. From that point on, over the course of six months or so, I saw such incredible progress being made. It's amazing how resilient and how quick and sponge-like these kids are.

I read that Reiche School, where you audition your singers, has the largest immigrant population in Portland.

That's an interesting question. Deering High School now is bordering on a 49 to 51 percent immigrant student body, students of color and various creeds and cultures. Portland High School is not far behind. King Middle School close to that. A number of the schools here in Portland now are very integrated.

What ages are your singers?

They're age ten and up. I have some folks in the chorus who have literally been in the group for nine



With poet Richard Blanco

years. They're now in college, and in a few cases, graduated from college, and are still singing with us.

Are all of the singers in your chorus immigrants or do you take non-immigrants as well?

We're all immigrants!

Okay, recent immigrants...

I have a couple of Caucasian kids who are here for that very purpose. One of the things that this chorus addresses, and that we all need to remember, is that we ARE all immigrants, unless you happen to be Native American. That is lost on all too many people these days. Historically, I'm Irish. My grandfather came over here mainly because they were going to hang him if he stayed in Ireland. He felt the sting of prejudice when he saw the signs, "No Irish Need Apply." A couple generations later, the Irish were assimilated and the next wave of immigrants came. The Irish were among the first to kick the ladders out. And that's what we've been doing ever since the first wave of immigration, whether we're Irish, Polish, German, Jewish. It doesn't matter. We're doing it now.

Absolutely. Have you read Ronald Takaki's book, *A Different Mirror* (<http://www.nea.org/tools/lessons/62404.htm>), about the history of immigration?

No. I'll write that down right now.

It's probably the best summary of the history of US immigration I've ever read, and it says in 600 pages what you just summarized in a few words! The stories of the people are very interesting, both in terms of what they left and what they found and experienced when they arrived here. It mirrors exactly what we are seeing now, with the anti-immigrant rants across the country.

It's just blatant, outright fear-mongering, and unfortunately, fear is a very powerful emotion. Some people are very good at playing on people's fear, Trump being a classic example. You can do scary stuff and a lot of damage in a very short period of time.

That's for sure. It's quite frightening. In my reading about the immigration situation in Portland as it pertains to your chorus, I found an *online conversation* (<http://www.city-data.com/forum/maine/380195-effects-refugee-resettlement-portland-lewiston.html>) between several people about the immigrants in Portland, comparing Lewiston and Portland in terms of racist immigrant backlash. The lack of understanding of the immigrants' plight, the echoing of media hype, and no apparent understanding of the bias held by the writers was shocking to me.

Lewiston is suffering significantly under the weight of Somali immigration and also the lack of employment in desperate economic times.

How far are you from Lewiston?

It's about twenty-five minutes from my doorstep. Again, it's fascinating, because if you look at the Lewiston situation, the immigrants are revitalizing the area of downtown that was devastated when the mills shut down. When

the mills left, Lewiston-Auburn, which was entirely a manufacturing city, fell apart.

And now immigrants are beginning to put it back together?

Yes, they're coming in and opening up little restaurants and shops. They're doing all the things that immigrants do. They're trying to better their lives.

In the online conversation I read, the comment was made, "Well, these aren't REAL immigrants. They didn't come here from Somalia. They came from Atlanta and now are joining families here. They've been in this country for a while, and now they are here taking our jobs and using up our resources."

That is true. Portland and Lewiston get a lot of immigrants who first landed in Atlanta and found it to be completely intolerable. You can imagine landing in Atlanta, being Somalians, and speaking only Arabic. It's untenable.

So then they look for other places to live, and Maine has been unusually welcoming to people of color, even though it is the whitest state in the nation!

It doesn't take long for the word to get out, which is why the population of Somalis grew so quickly in Lewiston. That was the issue—that so many came so quickly, which was overwhelming to a lot of the systems there.

Are any of the Lewiston immigrants in your chorus?

One of my greatest challenges is transportation. It's not like a nice little community chorus where the moms drop off the kids and come back to pick them up an hour later. That's not how it works. Parents of my kids are working or they don't have cars. Very fortunately, the Portland Housing Authority, where many of my kids live, has a bus and they've given me the bus. I'm the bus driver as well as the director. Since it's only a fourteen-seat bus, I don't need a special license to drive it. I have one parent who helps. I rehearse in an area called Kennedy Park, where a lot of my kids live, so they can walk. And when we perform (and we do a lot of that), I have to rent two fourteen-seater vans and a parent.



Are you making any CDs of your songs?

Yes, we have a CD out called *Music for the World: Pihcintu Multinational Chorus* (<https://itunes.apple.com/cy/album/music-for-the-world/id461034447>). I'm about to finish up mastering the CD of the *show* (<http://www.kennedy-center.org/video/index/M5896>) we did live at the Kennedy Center.

Now, how did you come to name the chorus? I read that it is a Passamaquoddy (http://www.passamaquoddy.com/?page_id=24) word.

When I first founded the chorus, I tried to come up with a name that in some shape or form spoke to the mission of the group. But every name I came up

with, I discovered, had already been taken by somebody else. So in a fit of pique, I went to the Portland Public Library, got out the [Passamaquoddy dictionary](http://pmportal.org/browse-dictionary/p?page=30) (<http://pmportal.org/browse-dictionary/p?page=30>), and I looked up the word "sing." There I found the word "pihcintu," which means "*when she sings, her voice carries far.*" And so Pihcintu was born.

So are there any Passamaquoddy speakers still around?

Yes, there are. There's a big movement up here amongst the Micmac, the Passamaquoddy, and the Abenaki tribes to keep the languages alive. I would love to find a Native American who would like to be part of the chorus. I just haven't found anyone in town yet. Again, that always boils down to transportation.

And time. It must be really hard to hold the chorus together while you are also trying to make a living.

Yes, that's always one of my larger issues. I have a production company, a series on PBS, and a series up here. I created a few characters called [Wompkees](http://www.keepmecurrent.com/lakes_region_weekly/news/wompkees-wompkees-everywhere-con-fullam-finds-success-in-children-s/article_1af49fef-e319-51e8-9aac-1237798b8073.html) (http://www.keepmecurrent.com/lakes_region_weekly/news/wompkees-wompkees-everywhere-con-fullam-finds-success-in-children-s/article_1af49fef-e319-51e8-9aac-1237798b8073.html). I have two movies in fifty countries. If you Google them, they come up all over the place!

On one of the videos on your website, the news anchor made a call for people to make donations to the chorus. How did that pan out?

Oh, you're talking about the concert we did for the governor's inauguration a while ago. I don't recall specifically from that airing. But we get a lot of support through foundations now. I got nothing for many years. I was sort of the financier and the player. But I've finally found a great grant writer and realized that the art of grantsmanship is an art indeed! If you are not one of those artists, then you can go for a very long time getting nothing, which happened to me. In my humble opinion, it's form over content in grant writing. If you don't understand the form, then the content doesn't matter!

So you've had better luck of late with funding, it sounds like. How do you go about getting publicity for your organization? Your website has a number of [television clips](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCxJB2AqArKv_MGOaI9C4O2w) (https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCxJB2AqArKv_MGOaI9C4O2w) that must have been very helpful.

The [Today](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=szWy64ZANpM) piece (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=szWy64ZANpM>) was a groundbreaker for us. It's obviously a very prestigious show and they came up here and spent the whole day filming. Then they gave us close to a five-minute piece on the air. [Voice of America](http://www.voanews.com/content/refugee-girls-chorus-sings-message-of-hope-134900168/165088.html) (<http://www.voanews.com/content/refugee-girls-chorus-sings-message-of-hope-134900168/165088.html>) did a piece that went all over the world.

Did that help you to get funding, either directly or indirectly, as a result of the programs?

Well, not directly, because there was not a call to action. But people like to donate to high-profile, successful organizations. And because we received all this national and international attention, I knew it made a difference in boardrooms and in places where these decisions are made.

I'd like to go back to the nuts and bolts of the chorus: your rehearsals,

repertoire, and planning. How often do you meet?

We meet every Monday for a couple of hours. Part of that time is devoted to snacks and socializing. Because they go to different schools, a lot of these kids don't get to see each other otherwise. So it's a social time, and also if I don't feed 'em, I get nothing out of 'em at that hour!

I have a small chorus, too, of the type that you described, with parents who bring their children and pick them up. Snack is key! They won't come if you don't have a snack. I understand that you compose most of the material the chorus sings, and the kids write some of the songs as well. What is your history in the music world?

I've been nominated for a couple of Emmys. My background is as a singer-songwriter and a pen-for-hire. For twenty years I toured and recorded for Epic Records. I wrote for most of the major publishers at one time or another: MCA, Universal, Chapel, and BMG.

Are you still doing that to pay the bills?

Yes. I also write a bunch of stuff for the kids. Most of the stuff we sing, I compose, or someone I know wrote it. And yes, that's what I do. I'm a songwriter. You don't ever stop doing that, I guess. It's very liberating to be writing for myself and not a company. I can write what I wish to write.

But you also get the girls to write. There was a beautiful poem by Eclas Ahmed (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tw3WFhv1qQ>).

She is a very powerful young woman. She is a force of nature!

Do you incorporate the poetry in the concerts as well?

Yes. She does that piece. In terms of the girls' writing, the only one we are performing at the moment is one that I co-wrote with Judith Abdullah, who literally was one of those kids on that cold November day ten years ago. She has an astounding backstory. Her mother was a child bride and was abducted into the Sudanese army. She escaped with her children and carried three of them across the desert to Egypt with five bullet wounds in her body. Judith is now a graduate of the University of Southern Maine and is working as a grief counselor. No one could be better suited to do that than her. The great part is to watch the success stories that have come out of this chorus. I'm certainly not suggesting in any way, shape, or form that it was the chorus that did it, but most of my kids have gone on to college. There's a very high success rate in that area, and a lot of them are coming out and doing wonderful things.

That's amazing, especially considering they are all ESL students.

Going back to the songwriting, how do you work with the girls to write the songs? Is it during your rehearsals or do you get together later? Do they hand you words that you set to music, or what exactly happens?

It really has to be more of a one-on-one situation, and I'm just starting to do more of that now. My focus is this chorus representing the immigrant experience to audiences in a way that really only they can. We're starting to integrate more of the kids' stories into the concerts. It's incredibly important for the audience to hear that these are not just people who come over here to collect welfare. They are classic immigrants. They came here for a better life.

Their parents are working hard. *They* are working hard. The parents are consistently insistent, constantly vigilant about their kids' success in school. And that's why there is such a high rate of success in college for these kids. That's what being here is all about for these families. The parents want their kids to have a better life than they had.

And most of them sat in refugee camps for years before they ever got a chance to start their new lives here.

Yes, many of them did. They came from the camps in Ethiopia, Uganda, and Egypt. (*Listen to some of their stories, recorded by the UNHCR* (https://www.youtube.com/results?search_query=Resettled+refugee%2C+Portland%2C+Maine+%2B+Pihcintu+Multicultural+Chorus))

Do they mostly come through an organization like Catholic Charities? They must have to have some sort of sponsorship.

A lot of them are asylum seekers and are over here on a limited run. They have to find their way or go back. That's becoming more and more difficult by virtue of what's going on here. I'm not sure what the breakdown between green card and asylum seekers is. It's probably quite a mix. Obviously, sponsorship is a big part of that, and Catholic Charities plays a big role.

Is there anything else you'd like to share with our CMN members about upcoming plans and projects?

Right now, there are our concerts and a collaboration with the Portland Symphony Orchestra in April around John Williams' compositions. We've been invited to Washington *Serenade* (<http://www.classicalmovements.com/dc.htm>), a five-day event in Washington, DC where choruses from around the world come together to sing for each other and with each other. The girls have been offered full scholarships, so now I'm raising the rest of the money to get them there. The invitation is there. They'll have a busy season coming up. And we just finished a very busy one that started with a show for the United Nations, which included the challenge of taking thirty-four girls to New York City. We stayed over for three days. We performed in front of 3,000 people for an event called *Under One Sky* (<http://unfoundationblog.org/under-one-sky-lets-share-global-goals-with-the-world/>), which was an international event that started at the Sydney Opera House in Australia, traveled around the world, and ended up at Dag Hammarskjold Plaza. Basically, it was about global poverty.

Sounds like last year's successes have paved the way for another full year for your chorus. Thank you so much for spending this time with CMN.



The Children's Music Network



Pro Song

Ten Lessons I Learned the Hard Way About Collaboration

by Monty Harper

Hello CMN songwriters! Today I want to encourage you to partner up and write songs together. When you co-write, not only do you sharpen your songwriting skills, you also forge new working relationships and reach more ears. In other words, it's a great way to build bridges! I've written with a dozen or more different partners over the years, not to mention legions of elementary school classrooms. The results have run the gamut from fantastic to disastrous. Since standard legal, financial, and how-to advice on co-writing is easy to find (just Google "co-writing a song"), what I offer here are a few lessons I've gleaned from personal experience. A quick note to any past co-writers of mine out there: I apologize for not following my own advice when I collaborated with you!



I. You will probably have to work at your partnership.

You know how the Hollywood version of true love is easy? You meet cute, then live happily ever after. But in real life, it turns out that even a great marriage has its ups and downs and takes a lot of effort to maintain. Cultivating a songwriting partnership is like that, too. It might seem like legendary songwriting teams magically click together, with golden hits flowing forth like manna from heaven. Yet with your real-life writing partner, you end up dealing with egos, struggling to communicate difficult ideas, and working outside your comfort zone.

Does it ever just click like magic? Perhaps, but I'm sure it always takes some groundwork to get to that point. Is it worth the effort when your partnership is a struggle? Yes. Your partner provides a different perspective and challenges you in ways you wouldn't challenge yourself. If you can find a way to work together, you'll end up creating something beyond what you're capable of on your own.

On the flip side of that coin, if you try repeatedly and get nothing but frustration, there's no shame in simply calling it off. Not every pair of writers is compatible.

II. Start fresh.

Don't bring a piece of writing to the table that you're already in love with,

because it's bound to be changed. And that's harder to accept than you think it will be. Everyone who writes about collaboration tells you this, but I still had to learn it the hard way.

III. As they say in improv, "Yes, and!"

When improvisational actors create a story spontaneously in front of a live audience, they get one shot at it. There is no opportunity to make changes. The most basic skill that allows them to succeed time after time is called "yes, and." Each actor must accept what the others create (yes), then add something relevant of their own (and).

As you begin a new song together, treat your session like an improv performance. Say "yes" to every idea. Build off of one another. Allow that momentum to carry you forward. Save organizing, editing, and polishing for later.

IV. Agree on how to agree.

Often I collaborate with twenty-eight kids in a classroom, all of us writing a song together. When my students disagree, I ask them to give reasons for their opinions, and then we take a class vote. If the vote is close, as the senior songwriter, I decide the outcome. My students know the process, so it's usually easy for them to accept the choices we make and move on.

Before you start writing, it helps to agree on how to agree. Maybe one partner gets final say on lyrics, and the other gets final say on melody. Maybe the partner who plans on recording the song first gets final say on everything. Maybe you each get three vetoes. Whatever you agree to will help you move forward when you run into the dreaded Difference of Opinion.

What about agreeing to both agree on everything? That may sound ideal, but it's challenging to do and may end up scuttling your progress, especially if this is your first attempt at writing together.

V. Accept your partner's judgment as you would a client's.

When you find it difficult to accept your partner's vetoes, shift into the mindset of writing for a client. Be respectful of your client's wishes and open to changes. I would never tell a client, "This song is perfect!" That determination is up to them.

I recently wrote a song for a statistics professor, and he requested a change that took all the emotional energy out of my first verse. After a bit of internal struggle (my wife, Lisa, may disagree about how "internal" it was), I accepted my client's wishes. What else could I do? I rewrote the verse, and ended up liking it even better—not because I agreed with my client's criticism (which was on technical mathematical grounds I barely understood), but because I found a way to communicate the emotion I wanted even more directly.

Your collaborator, like a client, may give some random-seeming reason, or no reason at all, why your brilliant piece of writing doesn't satisfy. Ask for clarification if needed, but don't argue. Just respond with a "yes, and" to their "no" and try again. Have faith that your combined talents and infinite creativity will lead you to find an even better solution that you both will love.



Billy Grisak (left) and Monty Harper. (photo by Lisa Harper)

VI. Keep evaluation as objective as possible.

You and your partner may agree that you want your song to be “funny” or “awesome” or “beautiful.” But agreeing whether you’ve met such subjective standards may prove difficult. Beauty, after all, is in the ear of the listener. It can be helpful, then, to shift your evaluation toward more objective matters—for example, whether the major third on beat four is surprising, or whether the punch line is clear in verse two.

With my elementary school students, I like to identify a few objective standards we can use to help make group decisions. These might include: “Lyrics should be appropriate for parents and siblings,” and “A song is about one thing.” Students rarely disagree if I ask, “Would your parents want to hear this?” or “Is this relevant to our main idea?”

Discuss objective standards with your partner as they come up. Does your song need to have perfect rhymes? Does your chorus need to be instantly singable? This will help you communicate more clearly and agree more often on what choices work best for your song.

VII. Know your purpose.

On occasion I’ll sit down to write with someone “just to see what happens.” Those sessions are fun and instructive, but they rarely produce a usable finished product.

In contrast, my most successful collaborations have had a clear purpose. Mr. Billy and I set out to write and record a whole CD together (*Let’s Get Creative*) for the 2009 summer library programs. We agreed to a marketing plan, a theme, and a deadline, and then we churned those songs out together like nobody’s business. Working toward a shared goal beyond just writing a song kept us focused and productive.

VIII. Recognize your partner’s strengths.

The classic co-writing model is for one partner to write lyrics while the other writes melody. But that’s far from the only approach. Maybe one partner is best at choruses, the other at verses. Maybe one partner is best at wildly imaginative ideas, the other at disciplined organization of thought. When Mr. Billy and I made our CD together, we discovered that he is excellent with big-picture thinking while I am excellent with details. We both wrote words and melody, but we also focused our efforts specifically to capitalize on one another’s strengths. Mr. Billy provided many brilliant song titles and concepts; I wrote many drafts of lyrics. He arranged many of the song structures; I made many improvements to prosody.

As you begin to recognize what your partner is best at, step back in that area and let their talent shine.

IX. Respect your partner’s time.

This is another nugget that all the advice-givers will tell you, yet I’m still struggling to learn it—especially when writing with a friend. It’s tempting to goof around and avoid the difficult and emotionally risky work of putting forth ideas. I’ve noticed that one or two wasted sessions will likely kill your collaboration.

Do the work between sessions that you promise to do; arrive to your session on time, well rested and present; and be ready to focus on the task at hand.

X. Commit to continue.

Your final “to-do” of each session is to look at the calendar with your collaborator and set up your next session. Even if you end up changing it later, actually scheduling work will keep you moving forward.

Hopefully I’ve armed you with some new wisdom on how to develop a healthy co-writing relationship. Now go find a partner (I’m always open to a good co-writer myself) and write something excellent together!



The Children's Music Network

Pass It On!

The Journal of The Children's Music Network

Home Issues Features Columns Songs Authors About PIO!

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Thoughts To Chew

How We Do What We Do

by Peter Alsop

A Facebook friend recently posted part of a [speech by Karl Paulnack](https://www.bostonconservatory.edu/news/music-division-director-gives-welcome-address) (<https://www.bostonconservatory.edu/news/music-division-director-gives-welcome-address>), Director of the Music Division at Boston Conservatory: "If we were a med school, and you were here in medical school practicing appendectomies, you'd take your work very seriously because you would imagine that some night at 2:00 a.m. someone is going to waltz into your emergency room and you're going to have to save their life. Well, my friends, someday at 8:00 p.m. someone is going to walk into your concert hall and bring you a mind that is confused, a heart that is overwhelmed, a soul that is weary. Whether they go out whole again will depend partly on how well you do your craft."

This excerpt sums up *why I do what I do* with my music. Actually, I think it applies to many of us, though in our case, it's more like 8:00 a.m. and our audience is a school "cafetorium" full of munchkin students on foldout lunch benches with distracted teachers riding herd on Kevin or Maria or Tyrone. Or maybe it's Saturday afternoon in a park or a library, with family units chattering together in clumps waiting for us to finish the sound check and begin our concert. Our audiences run the full range from confused and overwhelmed to weary and hyperactive. We have a bouncing two-year-old with overwhelmed parents trying to figure out how to set boundaries; a withdrawn six-year-old who doesn't talk about his brother who died a year ago from an overdose; a distracted principal who can't understand how she got into this job with all the paperwork; a foster grandma who wants to do a better job of parenting her granddaughter than she did with her incarcerated daughter. There's also a forty-year-old custodian hiding a broken heart, and an eight-year-old afraid to walk home after school because someone might beat him up. What's that you say? You didn't receive the memo saying that a part of the family entertainer job description is to heal the tired, poor, huddled masses of family members yearning to make things work a little easier? Is that really our job? Why DO we do what we do?

Going through the process of thinking about *why do I do this?* is worth the effort and helps us get better at what we do. In my case, I perform for families because I have skills for coping with some of the difficult things families face. I want to pass these strategies on to others so they can manage



their lives a bit better, and so they don't have to struggle like I did. I love playing music with kids. I also want grown-ups to laugh and know it's okay to be silly. I want an audience to leave my concert with tools in their toolbox that they didn't have when they came in. Knowing *why we do what we do* helps us make some of the difficult choices we inevitably face along our way.

As Mr. Paulnack said, it's about *how well (we) do our craft*, so figuring out *how we do what we do* requires identifying the steps needed to move toward our goals.

CMN Reader (from out of the blue): So what do you suggest?

Peter: Wha...who are you? Where did you come from?

I'm reading your "Thoughts to Chew" column. You throw out interesting ideas and we chew on them. It's interactive, right?

Well...yeah, sorta. I suppose.

You've been writing songs that help families for a long time, so tell me how to do it!

I don't tell people what to do. Only you can figure out what works for you. I'm happy to share techniques that work or don't work for me, and then you can take what you want and leave the rest, like a smorgasbord.

I try to be aware of perfection traps that lead us to believe there's only one way to do something! Systems that teach us to do things *the right way* usually mean *the way someone else wants them to be done*. So my first suggestion is to keep an open mind. There's always a different way to work out a roadblock problem.

Take a step! Take a step!
Who knows, it might be fun!
Take a step! Take a step!
When you gotta get something done!
If you got to clean your room today
and you'd rather go outside and play,
Just take that mess and use your head...
hide it under the bed!
—from "Take a Step (<http://www.peteralsop.com/song/take-step>)"

So what do you mean by "roadblock"?

It's any obstruction or resistance we get that keeps us from getting something done, like our own fears, or someone else telling us we will never accomplish what we're trying to do.

So when we hit a roadblock, how do we cope with it? Change direction?

Depends on the roadblock. Maybe we get help. I usually don't change direction, because I know I'm headed where I want to go. I've already given it some thought. Sometimes it seems impossible to get something done, but if we keep pluggin' away at it, a solution usually appears. As Ray Bradbury said, "Jump off the cliff and build your wings on the way down."

Seems stressful!

That's how my heroes do it: Pete Seeger, Martin Luther King, Kermit the Frog, Bernie Sanders, Bill Harley. They keep pluggin' away!

Pluggin' away, pluggin' away,
People who keep pluggin' away
They're the ones who get things done,
'Cause they keep pluggin' away,
They keep pluggin' away!
— from "Pluggin' Away (<http://www.peteralsop.com/song/pluggin-away>)"

The next *how* is to examine the roadblock to see if we created it from our old fears or habits.

How can we tell?

Most of us recognize our family baggage. Roadblocks like fear can get handed down from generation to generation. If my roadblock seems familiar, I look at it and see if I'm ready to let it go. Maybe it looked big when I was a kid, but now it's just a pothole in the road, and I can step over it.

Clean out the attic, let in the light.
The skeletons there will go dancing all night.
The ghosts that we hear are the ancestors cheering,
'Cause our kids won't inherit their woes,
So clean out the attic, some things need to go!
—from "Clean Out The Attic (<http://www.peteralsop.com/song/clean-out-attic>)"

I'm more about the music than the content, so if I create a fun, musical time for families to enjoy together, is that so bad?

No! It's great! When a family has a great time singing together, it can be transformational for them. It might be the only time it ever happens! And I'm a big fan of fun. One of the most creative parts of our craft, for me, is to figure out how to give useful content AND make it musical and fun.

How do you do that?

Let your audience make the music with you. Encourage them to make sounds or sing along. Ask them to clap or call out the rhyme word at the end of each stanza. That's how we include and connect them. It feels fun and safe and makes them want to hear more of what we have to say. I encourage family performers and indie artists to keep doing what we do, but to keep pushing our boundaries. Explore ways to include content that helps families address tough issues. Model how to talk safely about all the unspoken things in families that are scary or sad or that push anger buttons. If you don't have songs, make up an intro about a kid who used her head to avoid a fight in the playground. Say, "I felt so great when I saw her do that, I did a little dance!" then play one of your dance songs. Get the kids dancing in their seats. The intros don't have to exactly match the song for you to slip in some useful information or to make something fun.

How will I know if it works for them?

First you'll lose kids' attention, then the grown-ups'. Don't worry, you'll know!

Or you could ask them.

Ask my audience?

Sure. Ask them from the stage or after the show, or even drop them a note on social media! Ask what they remember from your show. They'll tell you!

Ask away! Ask away!

Don't wait to ask a question when you need to know right now!

Ask away! Ask away!

Find out who-what-where-when-why and how?!

—from "Ask Away (<http://www.peteralsop.com/song/ask-away>)"

It's scary to speak up about these issues, because some people won't agree with me. They might not buy my music or like me anymore. And I'm not sure kids will understand what I'm talking about, or whether I might make them more afraid.

So find a way to make it kid friendly. That's our craft! Pick one little life lesson you use and pass it on! Be entertaining! Test drive the songs with peers. Find something in a kid's life that has a similar theme they understand and approach the topic from there, or maybe put some animals in it.

Amy, the giraffe, stuck her neck up so high,
She saw hungry lions hiding in a bush nearby.
But Amy didn't tell her friends. She turned and ran away,
Now she feels awful 'cause she acted that way.
So Amy made a promise to speak up for little guys,
Even if it's scary for someone her size.
So when Amy spots a carnivore, she does her thing.
She sticks her neck out, and starts to sing!

Gotta stick my neck out, before it's too late!
Gotta stick my neck out, co-co-co-communicate!
Gotta stick my neck out when my friends are in a bind!
Gotta stick my neck out, and say what's on my mind!
—from "Stick My Neck Out (<http://www.peteralsop.com/song/stick-my-neck-out>)"

I'd like to model sticking my neck out. I'm upset about gun violence and global warming and child abuse, but I don't have any answers. How should I bring these things up in my kid show?

There's no *should*, just a challenging idea to chew on. All these loaded issues have the same roadblock: fear. And it's very real. Parents, teachers, and principals don't know what to do to stop these things either. We try to prevent them. We want to protect children, but it can feel more scary to kids when grownups won't talk about something! Kids see pictures of abducted children on the milk cartons, or someone's grandma dies, and grownups say nothing. When I'm stuck, I try to see what feelings are driving people's behaviors to see specifically *who* is afraid of *what*, and *why*. I examine *how* I soothe myself when I feel scared about this stuff. I look for an idea that could empower a child to feel safe when they're scared. Then I work on a song until I have something singable that kids can hold in their heads and their hearts. The opposite of caring and love is not hate; it's fear. So I look inside and remember, "I can't teach what I don't know."

My body's nobody's body but mine!
You run your own body, let me run mine!
Sometimes it's hard to say "No!" and be strong
When those "No!" feelings come, then I know something's wrong.
'Cause my body's mine from my head to my toe
Please leave it alone when you hear me say "No!"
—from "*My Body* (<http://www.peteralsop.com/song/my-body>)"

Thanks. Those are great points. I'm gonna think about *how* to help families more.

Ya gotta chew it to do it!

Glad you took THAT line!



The Children's Music Network



President's Message

By Liz Benjamin

We are really excited to ring in 2016. The Board Committees have been at work setting goals to ensure a diverse and expanding membership that will sustain CMN over the next twenty-five years and beyond. To this end you will be hearing about a number of new and engaging activities as the year progresses. And for sure we will be asking for your help in many ways.

The Membership Committee (Lisa Heintz and Kim Wallach, Chairs) has an aggressive goal of adding seventy-five new members to our community. To do this we need to better understand our current members and what aspects of CMN they most value, so we developed a short questionnaire that many of you responded to. Your input will guide these efforts.

We've also created a new buddy program to make sure new members are feeling connected from the beginning of their membership. **How can you help?** We have a few members ready to be buddies, but we would love to have forty more, so don't be shy! Let Jane Arsham know you would like to sign up, now or anytime.

The Marketing Committee (Ellen Allard and Jane Arsham, Chairs) is planning many new programs, including launching new social media programs, reaching out to new subsets of possible members like home schoolers, adding new song books to our great Song Library, and more. **How can you help?** We will be reaching out for new people to work with us on projects as they come up. Please re-tweet, "like," share, and tag our social media as often as you can, submit blog articles, and pass out flyers wherever you go.

The **FUNDraising Committee** (Katherine Dines and Susan Salidor, Chairs) is working to roll out a number of fun new programs throughout the year so we can lessen our dependence on our one big fall fundraiser. We had great success with our special Valentine's Day chocolate promotion from Equal Exchange and are planning similar ventures in the future. Coming up, keep your eyes open for a screening of a terrific film about an African children's chorus. **How can you help?** This one is clear—participate any time and in any way you are moved!

2016 will be the first full year with our new online **Pass It On!** Team: Brigid Finucane, Ginger Lazarus, Kim Arden, and Carl Foote. Our journal continues to be a vibrant, informative way to highlight new songs, read about issues of importance in the world of children's music, and be entertained.

We're so glad you are here with us. We look forward to hearing from you and working with you to make CMN the best it can be.



Pass It On!

The Journal of The Children's Music Network

Home Issues Features Columns Songs Authors About PIO!

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Reports | Spring 2016

Conference, Community, and CMN

By Dorothy Cresswell

After a rather zany taxi adventure at O'Hare Airport, I WAS THERE! I marveled at where I found myself, squeezed into the van with national and international award-winning, warm-hearted mentors and brand-new best friends. As a classroom teacher, I was careful to steer kids away from the term "best friend" to avoid hurt feelings and would ask the children to use instead "friend" or "good friend." Now, I have a confession. I have learned something. In the wonderful world of CMN, a person can have loads of "best" friends. Some of them you've known for only one minute. Some of them you've corresponded with for months on the forum and are only just now meeting face to face. Some of them you haven't met yet! But all of them have souls and songs and smiles and encouragement: best friend traits for me! In no time at all we had learned that our taxi driver was a children's musician from Morocco, and we were making international friends and harmonies. This weekend was off to a great start!

We each grabbed our luggage and headed into the conference center. A wave of lustrous singing washed over me from the crowd gathered informally around a piano, then I was scooped into a welcoming embrace by a beaming Liz Benjamin. Liz had come all the way from northern Vermont late last summer to attend a song swap at my house in western Massachusetts—a three-hour drive. When that delicious hug ended and I came up for air, Liz Hannon strode over for her hug! Even though we'd never met, I felt like we were family. From the moment I joined CMN, Liz welcomed me, shared my music, and has been a source of support and encouragement through e-mails and phone calls month after month. I'm sure she does that with everyone (and I marvel at that).

At the Newcomers Circle, we sang a partner song written by Joanne Hammil, whom I'd previously met in my region (the Northeast), so that felt like a touchstone. But I was partnered with a new face and name: Mara Sapon-Shevin. In less than a minute we learned that we had significant "likes" and looked at each other knowing that "you're going to be someone important in my life" feeling. Time will tell, but our music, our families, and our life work have strong overlaps, and we made a great connection. Around me I saw the joyful reunions of long-time members with their counterparts from all over the country and I knew that was going to be in my future. Instead of the conference being the great big GULP step into the unknown and being the new kid, I would soon have solid friends.

Line dancing! Circle dancing! Square dancing! What a treat!

Where am I? My own personal heaven? Dancing and a bonfire in the same night? For a split second I wondered whom I might dance with (that old annoying dilemma of anyone who didn't come with someone else), but with line dancing, there is no problem, and we all sashayed all over the room. Anyone in the mood was instantly included, and as we wove around and around passing a sea of beaming faces, both hands stretched wide, hearts and lungs expanded, blood pulsing to the beat, we fairly lifted off the ground! Joy incarnate! We are here, we are together, we are glad!

The line dancing came to an end, but in a few seconds I had a partner that was not only a friendly face, but one of my heroines in the field of women's and children's music, Nancy Schimmel! Woo-hoo! I had met her at my first national gathering the year before, but I had been too shy to do anything but blink in awe. Nancy Schimmel, author of "1492 (<http://www.sisterschoice.com/1492.html>)," a song I used every single year of my teaching career. I think a couple generations of Leverett, Massachusetts kids could sing the list of tribes: "The Inuit and Cherokee / the Aztec and Menominee / the Onondaga and the Cree; / Columbus sailed across the sea, but someone was already here!" Well, much as I love to sing, I am often tongue-tied. Now I didn't even have to make conversation, and we were joining hands, tuned to each other's steps, and forever good friends by the end of the dancing! Do-si-dos and backside-bumps, swing your partners, promenade! What a blast.

When I made it to my room I was quite tired, but the camper in me (who hadn't been camping in quite a while) just couldn't turn in because at that very moment the bonfire was being lit out on the beautiful shoreline of Lake Michigan. My roommate, Sarah Pirtle, had also intended on going to bed, but then couldn't resist the temptation either. Together we bundled up in our multi-layers (temperatures were dropping that weekend) and made our way out under the stars and to the fireside to join in the singing: "Under the boardwalk, out of the sun / Under the boardwalk, we'll be havin' some fun..." We returned to our room, hugging and laughing that we had made such a grand choice to go out there.

More highlights:

- My first workshop with Andrea was "Musicals with a Purpose." What a happy surprise to see young Luke Seston at the keyboard beside Andrea, jamming with her, showing his musical gifts, and beaming. He was so joyful that he just radiated over all of us, and we basked in the glow as we sang tearfully and joyfully, "I'm a person just like you!" I know we were all completely filled and inspired and would not have needed one more thing, but Andrea had more in store: a nationally acclaimed documentary made about her work of thirty years, building connections and affirming kids of all stripes. We thought our hearts could not open more, but stretch they did as we saw lives genuinely changed by her work.
- Some of the meals were working meals for me, which caught me by surprise, but I certainly realized the wisdom of seizing the opportunity to brainstorm with those from one's own region. I felt like a beginner on a fast-track graduate course, but hey, I signed up! And when the CMN board members explained the many goals and benefits they have worked so hard to implement, I felt privileged to be part of the community. Again. I love the CMN Code of Ethics, which I had no idea existed, but which I have experienced through all of my interactions with members. May I do my part to continue in a common spirit. My feeling of

appreciation and being blessed just grew all weekend.

- Early Sunday morning I wanted to have more time to visit with my roommate, but our sleep patterns were just enough different that I was up and heading out the door to try the qigong class when she woke up. I was torn in my decision (the fate of a Pisces), but since I had missed yoga the day before, I pressed on to qigong. As soon as I stepped into the gentle moves, guided by Jane Arsham's soothing voice, with the gentle sunrise coming into the room, I was glad I had made that decision. Lo and behold, Sarah joined the session ten minutes into it. Starting another full day with a slow pace and relaxing instrumental music was a gift to both of us.
- My final workshop was with the lovely and lively Alina Celeste (who had been my tech mentor—thank you!) and Jessica "Culture Queen" Smith (boldly called "Queen" for short). Bold was the lesson they were teaching. Stand out, strut your stuff, choose your colors, choose your theme, your slogan, a signature shtick! Be yourself—but in a magnified way. That's a line I could take and use—and I have! In fact, two days later I had a brand new outfit that I felt good in, just in time for my next *Curious Giraffe Show* (<http://www.pioneervalleysinging.co/The-Curious-Giraffe-Show.html>). And people noticed. It may change over time, but now I am thinking about my appearance like never before. And I have created a slogan and a logo with my three chosen colors. I'm so glad Alina and Queen shared what they have learned! They have clearly become great friends and they are each unique! Maybe someday I'll be hip like them, and maybe not, but I will be me. By the way, a key component of my striking new showtime outfit was a tunic that I purchased at the Glad Rags rack!
- Finally, the Magic Penny Award. It was a tight fit, but we managed to squeeze into the downstairs room that provided better lighting for the wonderful Pete Seeger video! At the conference, so much work was done behind the scenes, and the Magic Penny Award was the crowning touch. To have eaten breakfast with Tinya Seeger, and then have her expound on her family and what it was like to have Pete Seeger as her dad, was a treasure. The award itself, with the *Clearwater* wood carving, was so special, and singing and laughing together (just like he always wanted) was such a celebration. I was surprised to be invited to lead "Sailin' Up, Sailin' Down," and truly could not have done it without David Heitler-Klevans, Nancy Hershatter, Queen, Amy Conley, and Tina Stone. But that is exactly what happens. The invitation is given, you say yes, and help rallies around you. It was a blast to lead the song and feel part of a grand celebration. When we sang "We Shall Overcome," my past, present, and future—and Pete's, and yours, and my parents', siblings', wife's, children's, and grandchildren's—all whooshed through me in a giant wave of love and courage and hope. We Shall Overcome. By. Singing.

Thank you, Pete. Thank you, CMN.



Pass It On!

The Journal of The Children's Music Network

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Reflections on the 2015 CMN Gathering

Love Continues to Grow

By *Lisa Stewart Garrison*

I have been reminded that one of the surest ways to experience the essence and immediacy of the Children's Music Network and the profound benefits of CMN membership is to attend an International Conference. It's a time to steep oneself in the power of song, the pleasure of musical friendships, and the joy of being part of a learning community. At Zion, in the accommodating Conference Center, surrounded by dunes and ridges, oak savannas, and sand prairies on the southern shores of Lake Michigan, I was also reminded that attending CMN conferences is an entryway into a sense of place, a discovery of America, and in this case, an immersion into the Midwest with all of its sensibilities. At Zion, one feels shored up in the country's interior, yet opened up into the expansiveness of America's "fourth coast"—for as far as the eye can see, there are only the waters of Lake Michigan that appear to go on forever.

Any CMN gathering typically attracts its largest pool of attendees from its own environs, and 2015 was no exception. Having attended such gatherings only intermittently in recent years, I found the strength, organization, collegiality, and generosity of CMN in the Midwest a pleasant and unexpected surprise. It was impossible not to feel moved by the inclusiveness in the air and the friendly welcome extended by members who greeted those of us who'd traveled from afar.

While it's easy at Zion to remain completely within the intimate world of CMN, we shared the Conference Center with others. On several occasions, I found myself in the company of a couple from Spain (in the lobby and on the trails) who had opted to stay at the facility while touring Chicago to see the city from the vantage point of its natural surroundings. I struck up several conversations with them, my halting Spanish notwithstanding, and eventually found myself inviting them to join us for our Saturday evening round-robin.

Sitting near the front, singing along with all my heart, I noticed them quietly enter the back of the room. As the evening unfolded, with the children—some in pajamas—eagerly participating, and the love unfolding through song after song, I could tell they were visibly moved. For the rest of the night, I felt as if I were experiencing each moment twice: once for myself, and a second time as if perceiving each song through their eyes and ears. During a break, Suni Paz and I went back to speak with them. "Our friends can't understand why we come here," they told us. "They have negative opinions of Americans. But for us, a community like this is the legacy of the 1960s. These are the children carrying on that hopeful moment into the world. It's why we keep coming back here."

"Here" changes each year, but the spirit of the gatherings does not. At Zion I was reminded that CMN members come together to be inspired, connect with like-minded peers, and come home with new ideas. Innovations introduced at conferences—mentoring as a tool for advancing the work, informal counseling for first-time attendees, and a new Code of Ethics—combined with an ardently utilized and well-archived listserv and in-depth contributions to children's music literacy as codified in *Pass It On!* all bring CMN closer to the vanguard of community building, professional development, emotional intelligence, and music education.

I was reminded that as CMN turns inward to gather in international community—year after year in a spirit of learning—the ripple effects extend outward, the organization is renewed, and the love continues to grow.



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Magic Penny 2015

By Susan Salidor

Sunday afternoon, the waning hours of this year's CMN National Conference

I am in a cramped room full of people I admire. They are also friends, old and new, and we are eager to celebrate one of us: Pete Seeger.

As I wait for the program to begin, I wonder if everyone present knows that Pete refused the Magic Penny Award when he was alive, even after multiple asks. This, in spite of the fact that Pete is counted as a founder of the Children's Music Network, an off-shoot of the People's Music Network. Apparently he had little interest in and no use at all for awards, the National Medal of Honor (1994) and a Kennedy Center Honors award (1994) notwithstanding.

Pete is never far from our hearts and lips at CMN. When he died two years ago, he was musically celebrated by CMNers throughout the country as the nation mourned its greatest folk singer.

Pete always feels present at our gatherings and in fact attended past CMN conferences. He embodied and possibly coined "the folk process," a frequently repeated phrase in our community. His vast repertoire is well represented and can be heard at the round-robins, in workshops and often in both the opening and closing ceremonies.

I wonder how, exactly, Pete's singular spirit will be celebrated this afternoon. After all, I am sitting in a room of like minds who have known Pete the man, Pete the activist, Pete the songwriter, Pete the organizer, and Pete the song leader—in my opinion his most impressive gift.

In spite of his physical absence, it is not difficult to find Pete in the crowd. I hear him in Ruth Pelham's rough and ready voice; I see him in daughter Tinya Seeger's intimate reflections; I know him from the songs lovingly chosen by the Magic Penny Committee to highlight a long career and a life well lived, songs both silly and serious that reflected a man who knew the importance of music in children's lives. I am reminded of how children and young adults welcomed Pete to their schools and summer camps after the Weavers were banned from stages throughout the United States, their recordings censored by radio disc jockeys as the scourge of McCarthyism swept the nation.

We listen and sing along to some of his greatest hits—songs that are tuneful, easily learned, and thoughtful. No song sheets are necessary in *this* crowd. Pete's more memorable songs contain insights that he surely must have hoped would make us better humans. He was an optimist, and I believe he remained

one to the end, in spite of the societal discord and violence that accompanied his time on earth for nearly a century. One of his very last videos seems to support this as he performs Bob Dylan's "[Forever Young](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ezyd40kJFq0&feature=youtu.be)" with The Rivertown Kids (<https://www.facebook.com/Rivertown-Kids-Inc-230886900285517>).

It occurs to me that children's music found Pete, not the other way around. I feel the same thing happened to me, and I know I'm not alone, especially at this gathering. I would like to believe that Pete found solace, hope, and acceptance in audiences of children. I do.

The Magic Penny Award ceremony is always a rich program in a weekend of riches. This year was no different, and our celebration of Pete Seeger was the memorial CMN needed to mourn our friend, our mentor. In his memory, may we continue to lift our voices together in song.



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New Sounds

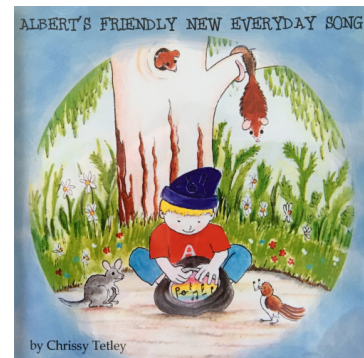
Compiled by Barbara Rice

Note: These descriptions of new releases are sent in by the CMN members mentioned, but they may have been edited by Pass It On! staff for style, consistency, or length. The materials have not been reviewed. In addition to the sources listed, many recordings are available at local independent children's book and record stores.

Chrissy Tetley

Albert's New Friendly Everyday Song

Everyone and anyone who enjoys listening to beautiful and foot-tapping music will enjoy this audiobook, an audio story in the form of old-fashioned storytelling that sneaks a musical education in the background. The engaging story encourages discussion about why music makes us feel so good, giving children the opportunity to enrich their lives through the understanding of sounds of music and orchestral instruments. Suitable for children ages 3–7 years, *Albert's New Friendly Everyday Song* covers some essentials of musical instruments and basic sounds, as in low-high, fast-slow, loud-soft sounds. It is one of three award-winning audio books produced for parents, children and teachers specifically for children's music education.



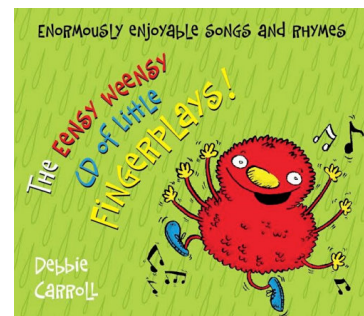
All children's audio books by Chrissy Tetley are available through Audible.com, iTunes, and Amazon.

Debbie Carroll

The Eensy Weensy CD of Little Fingerplays

Fingers are portable puppets that can be flowers, fish, pussycats, or even teacups, and fingerplays tell stories that offer opportunities for enriching vocabulary, speech, and fine motor skills. They are fun to do alone or with a friend, and a special intimate part of an early childhood music class. *The Eensy Weensy CD of Little Fingerplays* (formerly *The Eensy Weensy Book of Little Fingerplays*, with CD) is a collection of new and traditional songs and rhymes for early childhood, produced by Ken Whiteley and Merriweather Records.

Eighteen tracks include old favorites such as "Here is the Beehive" and "This Little Piggy Went to Market" alongside original fingerplays like "Ten Little Bats" and "The Wise Mother Duck," and some traditional rhymes with new tunes added, such as "I Shut the Door" and "This is the Baby." Teachers, caregivers, parents, and children will enjoy listening and following along with the lyrics and suggested actions in the illustrated booklet.



The CD is available at CD Baby (disc and digital versions), [Merriweather Records \(http://www.merriweather.ca\)](http://www.merriweather.ca), and [www.debbiecarroll.com \(http://www.debbiecarroll.com\)](http://www.debbiecarroll.com).

Don Jordan and the Nutshell Playhouse Band

We're Here

The Nutshell Playhouse Band invites young people to tap into their imaginations and enter a world of fantasy, a place where the regular laws of nature are suspended and where anything can happen. Collected from Nutshell Playhouse theater performances, these lively and tuneful songs will get the whole family singing along and even making up verses of their own. Meet the Snoof—a detective who uses his five senses to find anything, even if it isn't there; the Ductionary—the duck who knows every word in the English language; and Taco Caramba—the fiercest pirate-parrot ever to fly the seven seas. Learn to talk “pirate” and dance with a clown.



Available on iTunes, CD Baby, and Amazon. Price: \$9.99.

Find out more on our website: [www.donsongs.org \(http://www.donsongs.org\)](http://www.donsongs.org).

Elise Witt

We're All Born Singing

Elise celebrates her 12th studio album of original songs on the independent EMWorld Records label. This collection is about the power of singing to vibrate us individually and to bring us together as community. [The Global Village Chorus \(http://www.globalvillageproject.org\)](http://www.globalvillageproject.org)—students from Afghanistan, Burma, Congo, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Iraq, Nepal, Somalia, and Central African Republic—join Elise on “I See You With My Heart,” a multi-lingual musical collage of welcome, and on “Break the Silence,” written for [One Billion Rising \(http://www.onebillionrising.org\)](http://www.onebillionrising.org), to end violence against women and girls around the world. Elise also dives deep into her fascination with language and sound on songs like “Earbone” and “Song Deep in Your Bones.” The majority of these songs have also been arranged for choirs in the [Elise Witt Choral Series \(http://elisewitt.com/web/choral-series\)](http://elisewitt.com/web/choral-series). See a glimpse of what Elise does in this [video \(https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e0YHTe_Q7bE&feature=youtu.be\)](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e0YHTe_Q7bE&feature=youtu.be).



Purchase the CD and/or digital downloads at [www.EliseWitt.com \(http://www.elisewitt.com\)](http://www.EliseWitt.com), CD Baby, iTunes, and all major Internet music stores.

For more information e-mail Elise at elisemwitt@gmail.com.

Janie March

I Love to See You Smile

Janie March is an educator and a former nursery school teacher who dedicates *I Love to See You Smile* to all the students she worked with over the years. This CD includes engaging true stories as well as songs that will lead you through the seasons, such as “I’m a Funny Jack-o’-Lantern,” “I Remember Christmas,” and “Happy Valentine’s Day.” The song “Newy the Newt” helps teach children how to recognize sounds of various musical instruments. It was inspired by Janie’s friend, Ms. Holland, who had a one-eyed newt visiting her



classroom. "AKA Harper" is based on a true story about Max, the dog who was rescued after Hurricane Katrina. The songs on *I Love to See You Smile* are fun, educational, and sure to be enjoyed by kids and families.

The CD is available on CD Baby and Amazon.
Songs can also be downloaded on CD Baby or iTunes.

Keeth Apgar / The Harmonica Pocket

Sundrops

The Harmonica Pocket's new release, *Sundrops*, is a super uplifting and organic album made for families with kids. (Think less silly, more dirty fingernails.) Winner of a Parents' Choice Gold Award and a NAPPA Bronze, the album is full of rich vocal harmonies, inspired musical performances, and sweet songwriting, and was recorded using solar electricity at Keeth's off-grid recording studio on a tiny island in the woods of Washington State.



More info can be found on Facebook (<http://www.facebook.com/HarmonicaPocket>), Twitter (<https://twitter.com/HarmonicaPocket>), LinkedIn (<http://www.linkedin.com/in/keethapgar>), YouTube (<http://www.youtube.com/user/harmonicapocket>), Instagram (<http://web.stagram.com/n/harmonicapocket>) and at www.harmonicapocket.com (<http://www.harmonicapocket.com>).

Lisa Sniderman / Aoede

Do You Believe In Magic?

Go on a spellbinding journey to the cursed kingdom of Wonderhaven, where a muse (Aoede) has a secret, and enchanted books and witches break into song! Wonderhaven is under a malicious memory curse and rapidly losing its magic. Aoede, the Muse of Song, believes she has no use or magic, yet she is plagued with a big secret and is the only one who can save magic and the Kingdom. Listeners will embrace the colorful characters, the compelling story, the infectious songs, danceable duets, narration, and full musical score. It is more than mere fantasy; it is about believing in yourself. *Do You Believe In Magic?* is an award-winning full-length fantasy musical audiobook from quirky folk pop artist and playwright Aoede, aka Lisa Sniderman. Endorsed for ages 8–12, *DYBIM* will resonate with tweens, teens, families and all kids at heart who enjoy fantasy and YA fiction.



Available digitally from iTunes and Amazon (\$11.99). Physical copies available from <https://doyoubelieveinmagic.info> (<https://doyoubelieveinmagic.info>) and CD Baby (\$15 double CD).

For more info:

<http://isloveafairytale.com> (<http://isloveafairytale.com>)

<http://whataredreamsmadeof.com> (<http://whataredreamsmadeof.com>)

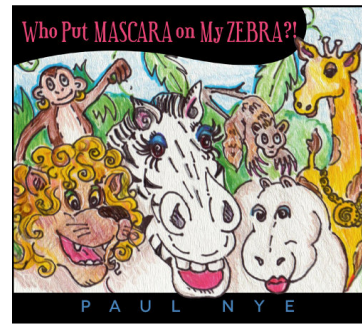
<https://doyoubelieveinmagic.info> (<https://doyoubelieveinmagic.info>)

PAUL NYE

Who Put Mascara On My Zebra?

Who Put Mascara On My Zebra?, Paul Nye's third children's recording, is a clever, danceable romp through familyland. Paul's original songs strike a creative balance between teaching positive values and having some silly fun.

Themes include kindness, respect, friendship, positive self-image, and pure simple joy. A multi-instrumentalist, Paul owns his own studio and involves many young people in his community in his recording projects and live performances. Over 200 elementary school kids sang back-up vocals on three songs on this CD. Paul has enjoyed watching his band members through the years grow up and become fabulous musicians in their own right. Emily Widman, who sings on all 17 cuts on *Who Put Mascara On My Zebra?* and solos on "Gotta Be A Friend," started singing and recording with Paul in fourth grade. She will graduate in 2016 and plans to major in music at college. Paul calls his music "Adult-Friendly Kids' Music." *Who Put Mascara On My Zebra?* is "Kid Tested and Parent Approved Rock & Roll 4 Kids!"



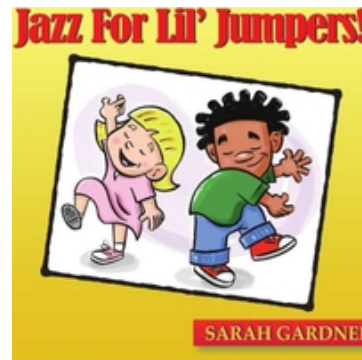
All of Paul's recordings are available on iTunes, Amazon, CD Baby, and other online music stores.

You can also access his music through his website, www.paulnye.com (<http://www.paulnye.com>).

Sarah Gardner

Jazz for Lil' Jumpers

This collection of songs is geared to be practical and used by parents, caretakers and preschool teachers for moving motivation. It includes Dixieland versions of Sarah's "Jump," "It's Raining Cats & Dogs," and "Construction Site," plus Sesame Street favorites "Ladybug Picnic" and "C is for Cookie." The gospel version of "Itsy Bitsy Spider" is augmented by a bridge that hints at what makes this spider so resilient. After the dance-off 1920s tune "Happy Feet," "Goodbye, Sing This Song" offers a special way to handle tough goodbyes.



Jazz Pour Les Bebes (Jazz for Babies)

To a child, "Hello Dolly" is a song about finding a lost toy, "Pennies from Heaven" is about enjoying a rainy day, and "My Baby Just Cares For Me" is a love-my-momma tale. Sarah grew up in a family of jazz musicians, often taking her childhood naps on pool tables in the back of jazz clubs in Manhattan. When her father, jazz composer and arranger Herb Gardner, was diagnosed with lymphoma in 2014, she became inspired to make sure this style of music is shared with the next generation. These songs that she often performs for young children are among her fans' favorites. A lot of songs have the word "baby" in the title because kids get a kick out of singing about babies. But the album is really for kids of any age who like fun music. "I really hope this is one of those CDs that never comes out of the minivan," says Sarah.



Both CDs are available at iTunes, Amazon, and CD Baby.

More info at www.musicwithsarah.com (<http://www.musicwithsarah.com>).

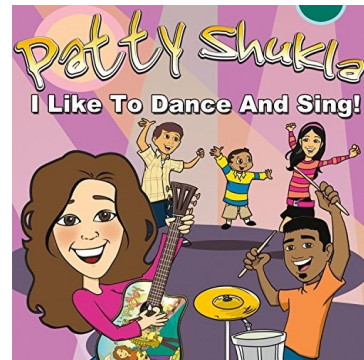
Patty Shukla

I Like to Dance and Sing!

This album features curriculum-based movement songs, including a partners tango song, a right and left dancing song, a counting bubbles song, and much more. Perfect for ages 2-8. Known for her music videos on YouTube, Patty Shukla and her husband Neel write, compose, arrange, record, and video everything on their own. This is their seventh year creating educational music

together. All songs on this album are inspired by their children. "Mommy's Got a Baby in Her Belly" was the official announcement song Patty shared with her YouTube fans when she and Neel found out they were having a third child. It is now one of the highest viewed videos on her [YouTube channel \(http://www.youtube.com/pattysukla\)](http://www.youtube.com/pattysukla).

Available on Amazon and iTunes, and at www.PattyShuklaKidsMusic.com (<http://www.pattysuklakidsmusic.com>).



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